

Heather L. Siekkinen. Factors influencing comic book and graphic novel collecting among private elementary and middle school libraries in North Carolina. A Master's Paper for the Master of Science in Library Science degree. April 2012. 88 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell.

This two-part study analyzed school library websites, OPAC holdings, and survey results, using six data collection instruments, to examine various factors influencing and explore variables relating to comic book and graphic novel collecting among private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina. Librarians in this study who collect comic books and graphic novels were found to be more likely to display such professional characteristics as being technology and curriculum leaders, having a library website, and reading professional literature of various types. Private elementary and middle school librarians with an MLS degree in North Carolina who collect comic books and graphic novels have richer and larger comic book and graphic novel collections, and use more varied tools to develop them. Most of the schools in the OPAC study are collecting recommended core comic book and graphic novel titles, regardless of religious affiliation or location in the state.

Headings:

Comic books, strips, etc.

Graphic novels -- selection

School libraries -- Collection development

School libraries -- Independent schools

School libraries -- North Carolina

Selection tools (Libraries)

FACTORS INFLUENCING COMIC BOOK AND GRAPHIC NOVEL COLLECTING AMONG
PRIVATE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NORTH CAROLINA

by
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Introduction

Librarians' attitudes towards and collecting of graphic novels and comic books have evolved throughout the past hundred years or so. In the past, many librarians considered it their duty to protect and promote high culture, to civilize and bring great culture and literature to the masses (Ellis and Highsmith, 2000, 30). Many disapproved of comic books because they perceived the writing, artwork, and physical materials of the books themselves to be of poor quality (Ellis and Highsmith, 2000, 26). Throughout the decades of the twentieth century, as the popularity of comic books and graphic novels waxed and waned, most librarians still disdained them and did not collect them in earnest. In time, however, more "appropriate" titles aimed at younger readers proliferated (McPherson, 2006, 67); more empirical studies appeared indicating strongly that comic books challenge readers cognitively and uniquely (McPherson, 2006, 67); and multi-media and heavily visual communication tools such as television, film, and the Internet became more accepted and more sophisticated (McPherson, 2006, 67). Serious, respected novelists began writing comic books and graphic novels; bigger publishers began producing graphic novel and comic book titles; and high quality imports came from Japan and France, where graphic novels had a strong history without negative stereotypes (McPherson, 2006, 67). The boom in superhero movies in the 2000s also contributed to comic books' strong return in the 2000s. Between 2001 to March 2009, there were 61 U.S. movies based on comic books or graphic novels (Griffith, 2010, 182). And so a previously scorned format became a popular, multi-billion dollar industry, supported by artiste writers, coveted awards, hip cache, and respected empirical research.

By 2012, many school librarians have begun to collect graphic novels and comic books. Comic books and graphic novels have won or been nominated for several prestigious awards, such as the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, Los Angeles Times Book Prize (Yanes, 2011), Printz, Sibert, Geisel, Alex, Hugo, and National Book Award (Volin, 2011). They have especially been valued because they bring readers in to the school library during an era when fewer children read for pleasure.

Most of the professional literature about collecting comic books and graphic novels in school library media centers has fallen into a few categories. These are:

- introduction to the format;
- pieces encouraging media specialists to get started;
- practical tips about shelving, processing, and classification;

- advice about promoting the collection;
- successful lessons planned and executed with comics;
- sources for selection and selection tools;
- adolescent or teenagers' attitudes about comic books, and
- selection recommendations

Despite a plenitude of recommended lists, there is very little research about which comic book and graphic novel titles school librarians currently collect; how they collect them; which factors influence that collecting; and how this collecting fits in with new information literacies expected in the twenty-first century and delineated in the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the Twenty-First Century Learner. There are even less data regarding private school elementary and middle school librarians and these issues; much of the literature focuses on its uses and readers in high schools. This study focused on an under-researched topic: in what manner and which titles elementary and middle school private school librarians in North Carolina collect comic books, and an exploration of factors that correlate to and influence that collecting.

As more public school libraries lose their credentialed librarians and as their budgets are cut across the nation, some of North Carolina's private school libraries continue to thrive, while other private school libraries in North Carolina struggle with a lack of resources. While many public school libraries are fading away into irrelevance through lack of professional staffing and funding, private school libraries may well be the school libraries that survive into the twenty-first century. I researched the comic books and graphic novels private elementary and middle school North Carolina school librarians collect, their attitudes toward them, factors that might influence their collecting, and how these factors relate to other variables. I hope this data will provide a microcosm for understanding the actual collecting of a reading format – the humble comic book – that is very powerful for nurturing life-long love of reading, helping readers draw conclusions (Krashen, 2004) and develop multi-modal literacies (McPherson, p. 185), and providing data (through high circulation statistics) that help indicate why administrators should continue to fund school libraries. Attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels in the school library can indicate how in tune the library media specialist is with the changing needs of today's learners. Therefore I also hope this data can help provide an accurate, up-to-date signpost indicating whether school libraries can remain viable by changing with the times to continue to draw readers by providing high-interest comic books and graphic novels, or whether private school librarians will let past negative library attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels help dig their own graves as students are seduced away from reading by more technologically sophisticated entertainment options. Data about which comic book and graphic novel titles school librarians feel are worthy of their limited budget dollars will help provide information about how well the literature's recommended title lists serve private school elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina who are striving to keep their libraries supported and thriving.

This study also explored links and correlations among the variables. This study examined the patterns and connections among such factors as OPACs that have a high numbers of recommended comic book titles, librarians with MLS degrees, school characteristics such as wealth of county and religious or independent profiles of the schools, librarians' attitudes towards comic books, librarians' comfort levels with technology, librarians' position as technology or curriculum leaders in their schools, selection tools, evidence of comic book promotion, presence of a school library web page, etc. I wanted to establish whether a relationship existed between how many of the desirable checklist comic book titles each school has, and whether the school library webpage scores highly in online evidence of student use of Web 2.0 tools and online promotion of reading and comic books. I was investigating whether a quality graphic novel collection has a connection with whether the school library to which it belongs helps nurture student reading and student use of Web 2.0 tools.

This topic is timely for several reasons. First, the school library field is undergoing several significant changes. In the past few years, many school library positions have been eliminated or filled with paraprofessionals or volunteers. This trend is taking place among some North Carolina private school library media centers as well (Independent Schools Librarians' Networking Event, Spring 2011). However, because private schools are managed by governing boards locally, they are not subject to the sweeping district-wide layoffs affecting public schools in North Carolina that can eliminate large numbers of positions at once.

Second, some areas of North Carolina, such as Charlotte and the technology magnet Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill region, have continued to prosper throughout the current recession and have done better financially than most areas of the country (Kotkin, 2011). While many school and public libraries struggle in the state and indeed throughout the country, some private school librarians in North Carolina still enjoy and report wealthy parents and (comparatively) healthy budgets (Independent Schools Librarians' Networking Event, 2011). Indeed, throughout the past twenty years, Raleigh has enjoyed the third-highest job growth in the U.S. A Forbes evaluation published in 2011 proclaimed Raleigh to be an "economic superstar, with job-creation records among the best in the nation" (Kotkin, 2011, p. 1). Raleigh was ranked #2 in the U.S. for growth in the next ten years, while banking center Charlotte was ranked #8 (Kotkin, 2011). For this reason, along with the fact that they tend to avoid the widespread layoffs that public schools can suffer, private schools in Charlotte, Raleigh, and other prospering areas of North Carolina might be an important model for surviving American school libraries staffed by professional librarians. If so, how and what these librarians collect – and the types of libraries they shape – will matter for the future.

Furthermore, with a lack of a district-wide selection policy and consequently more freedom in collecting choices, and (relatively) discretionary budgets, North Carolina school librarians at prosperous private schools might be among the most dynamic

collectors in school media centers throughout the country right now. Thus it is very interesting and informative to investigate their comic book collections for elementary and middle school students, when more and more comic books appropriate for younger grades are being published (Gutierrez, 2009). It will also be significant to compare the collecting of comic books in these wealthier elementary and middle school private school libraries in relation to their counterparts in poorer areas of North Carolina that are struggling. Do these schools in more economically challenged counties, with perhaps fewer resources, smaller budgets and maybe more precarious professional librarian job positions, see comic books as essential? If not, which – if any – comic book titles are they committed to? How are comic books perceived in these areas? Do they collect more or fewer comic books compared to their wealthier counterpart school libraries? How does a religious profile of a school impact the type or amount of comic books collected? Thus this study will provide current data about trends in private school library comic book collecting. It will indicate to what extent comic books have truly been accepted as a necessary element of the collection, even when money is tight. Although comic books boost circulation, provide statistics to show how well-used the library is during a time when people are not sure if they still want brick and mortar libraries, bring more readers and different types of readers into the library – do these factors outweigh their negative image from the past?

Additionally, this study surveyed the private school librarians about what they collect, and which comic books they feel should be collected. As Michele Gorman, one of the experts in school library comic book collecting, noted, “A decade from now there will be a list of must have children’s graphic novels,” but there is not yet a canon for elementary and middle school comic books (Weiner, 2010, p. 49). This study examined which titles are collected that appear on some suggested lists created by other librarians, and surveyed the librarians about which titles they would recommend that other private elementary and middle schools should collect. This is significant for two reasons: First, it will gather data about what’s actually being collected, by librarians with more and less funding. Which comic books are prioritized? Also, it will indicate whether private school librarians agree that certain recommended comic books are actually the ones they feel are appropriate for their communities when tough choices have to be made. I would hope that this study could contribute to a recommended comic book canon for elementary and middle school children that librarians actually purchase in a challenging economic climate.

I was also interested in the factors influencing comic book collection in private elementary and middle school libraries in North Carolina, and how these factors relate to the selection of comic book collecting. For example, how does the culture of the school influence how and which comics are collected? How do the perceived attitude of teachers, administration, and parents towards comic books influence how comics are collected at various schools in the study? What is the connection between the librarian’s personal reading history and attitudes about comic books, and how does that affect how he or she collects comics? Why do private elementary and middle school librarians

collect comic books and graphic novels, and what are their reasons for not collecting them? What standards or criteria do they use? Is there any connection between a school's religious affiliation and which comic book titles being chosen, or between a school's religious affiliation and a decision not to collect them? Is there a correlation between choosing to collect comics and graphic novels, and the librarians' strategies for locating the school library media center as a learning commons for the twenty-first century? And is there evidence that there is a connection between school librarians' having an MLS and nurturing technology and digital information literacies among the staff and students at the school, and the titles and scope of their graphic novel or comic book collection?

Literature Review

Scope and Methodology of the Literature Review

To review the literature, I searched Library Literature, LISA, ERIC, Google Scholar, Google, EBSCO, ProQuest, Academic Search Premier, *Journal of Popular Culture*, and JSTOR. I also searched the University of North Carolina's library catalog for popular and research articles, monographs, Master's Papers, graphic novels, and online holdings. I used various combinations of subject headings and search terms, such as "graphic novels," "comic books," "comics," "manga," "attitude," "media centers," "private schools," "North Carolina," "collection," "collecting," "media specialists," "school librarians," "factors influencing," "factors affecting," "surveys," "purposive sampling." These searches returned articles, monographs, papers, and theses mostly about how librarians have progressively begun to embrace graphic novels and comic books after many years of some support but often negative or ambivalent attitudes about collecting them. The research studies on comic books in school library media centers largely focus on reading acquisition, justification for collecting comic books based on literacy and cognitive development, collaborative and library lessons, or adolescent or teenagers' attitudes about comic books. There is not much recent published research data about which titles school librarians collect, how school librarians select their comic book collections, or factors influencing that selection. There is even less published research data about current collecting of comic books among private elementary and middle school librarians; much of the literature focuses on its uses and readers in high schools, or collecting and collections in public or academic libraries.

After extensive reading of popular and scholarly journal articles, books, monographs, blog postings, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science Master's Papers, the only data I was able to find specifically about North Carolina school librarians' collecting of and attitudes towards graphic novels were in some University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Master's Papers. I also read approximately 30 comic books and graphic novels recommended in the professional literature for elementary and middle school libraries.

In order to research ways to evaluate the comic book and graphic novel holdings in several private elementary and middle school libraries, I also researched various tools for evaluating library collections. I searched using various combinations of the search terms "evaluation tools," "collection evaluation," "collection evaluation tools," "checklists," "inductive," "deductive," "list checking," "brief tests," "usage," and "conspectus." I researched the advantages and disadvantages of various collection

development tools, and I also researched studies conducted using different types of library collection evaluation tools.

History of Comic Books in the U.S. and Librarians' Attitudes Towards Them: An Overview

In the earlier part of the twentieth century in the U.S., comic books were wildly popular with both adults and children, if not librarians. The "funnies" and comic books' popularity with a wide segment of the American population reached a peak during the so-called "Golden Age of Comics," during World War II when Superman was an untarnished hero everyone could embrace (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 23). A more cynical American public turned more to violent horror and crime comics after the war, which led to a public backlash against comic books (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 23). Dr. Fredric Wertham was the voice of this backlash, and he led a cry that these violent comics, which he claimed were associated with juvenile delinquency, were an evil influence and should be banned. His movement led to Congressional hearings, which in turn prompted the comic industry to begin to produce more insipid, safe, and unpopular comic books. In addition to the industry's resultant self-policing under the "Comics Code," the rising popularity of television and changes in the way magazines were distributed crippled the comics industry, leading to a sharp decline in popularity (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 23).

The "Silver Age" of comics came in the 1960s, however, with the introduction of DC's Flash and Marvel's new, more flawed heroes. It became hip to like comic books (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 24). Other factors contributed to comics' popularity: cultural critics began to examine comics; fans began to collect them; and underground "comix" by the likes of R. Crumb were considered arty. In the 1960s, another turning point came when popular culture became a scholarly study; comics were included in that research (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 30). During the 1970s, professional library literature indicates that public librarians began to collect it more frequently, and view it more positively, although much of the literature still documents negative attitudes towards it (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 32). During the 1970s, the phrase "graphic novel" appeared (McCloud, 1993). Although the definition of the labels "comic book" and "graphic novel" are still controversial (McCloud, 1993), the term "graphic novel" helped lend comic books the more intellectual stamp that they carry today. During the 1980s, professional conversations advocating comic book and graphic novel collecting in school libraries began to appear in such journals as *School and Community* and *School Library Journal* (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 33). Academic libraries, public libraries, and school libraries thus were collecting comic books and graphic novels by the 1980s, with scholarly monographs, popular culture studies, and debates and reviews in professional journals such as *Voice of Youth Advocates* bringing the topic into view (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 35). By the 1980s, OCLC began to include comic book and graphic novel records; chain book stores began to carry comics and graphic novels (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 34); *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist* began to feature comic books; and popular publications began to offer suggestions for librarians to start comic book and graphic novel

collections. The critical darling *Maus* was published in 1986, winning many awards (including the Pulitzer in 1992) and spurring a paradigm shift as many librarians began to consider the idea of comic books as serious art. During the 1980s, many school librarians in Missouri surveyed said that they had comic books in their collections; eighty-six percent of the librarians surveyed (most of whom were school librarians) said that they had books with comic strips in them. While during the early 1990s comic books thrived both artistically and economically, by the end of the decade the industry was struggling. Marvel, one of the “Big Two” along with DC, even filed for bankruptcy in 1996 (Ellis & Highsmith, 2000, p. 25).

However, as the 1990s progressed into the 2000s, more research appeared in the literature supporting comic books as tools educators could use to promote critical thinking and literacy. Teachers, reading experts, and more and more librarians had positive things to say about the value of comic books and graphic novels. Joanne Ujail and Steven Krashen’s landmark 1996 study of seventh-graders who read comic books strongly indicated that comic books and graphic novels did not hurt readers (Ujail and Krashen, 1996). Popular library journals, a class of professional reading regularly read by 53% of the school library media specialist who responded to this study, frequently touted the benefits of collecting comic books and provided start-up collection title lists. Comic books and graphic novels are now regularly reviewed in reputable book review journals, a collection tool that 94% of the school library media specialists who responded to this survey use. School library media specialists have started to collect comic books and graphic novels more and more.

Children’s and Young Adult Librarians in North Carolina: Librarians’ Attitudes Towards and Factors Influencing the Collecting of Graphic Novels and Comic Books

Librarians working with children and young adults in North Carolina in this century also demonstrate positive, although sometimes mixed, attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels. In 2002, Ruffin Priest interviewed five public school librarians in North Carolina to gather data about the way they selected comic books and graphic novels. The results of this study were published in a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s SILS Master’s Paper entitled “Attitudes of School Librarians Toward the Inclusion of Graphic Novels in School Library Collections.” This study, conducted ten years ago when many school librarians were still leery of graphic novels and comic books in school libraries, provides some valuable qualitative data about librarians’ attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels. In this study, Priest presented five public school librarians with thirteen graphic novels and asked him or her to sort each title in one of three categories: 1.) titles he or she would collect, 2.) titles he or she would not collect, or 3.) titles he or she was certain about collecting. Of the five librarians involved in this interview / think aloud, two were elementary public school librarians, one was a public middle school librarian, and the remaining two were in public high schools. Participants were then asked four questions about why he or she made their respective choices. The librarians’ responses were then collected and reported in various sections describing the

way they examined the books and what they said about certain elements, for example, “violence,” “descriptions of females,” “age of character.”

The librarians in this study responded positively to including graphic novels in their collections. All of the librarians said they would collect at least two of the “exemplary” books. All of the librarians except for one said that they had not read a graphic novel but that they were interested in collecting them. Some of their reasons for collecting them included using them as bait for children who don’t normally use the library, and hoping that the graphic novels would serve as a bridge so they would later read “real” books.

Priest noted that their responses indicated that most of the librarians lacked a profound understanding of the format, and that they were reviewing the comic books with the same criteria they would use for text-only books. Thus they were dissatisfied at times with the lack of text, concerned that the page layout was too busy, or difficult to read, etc. The researcher argued that librarians should be more educated about the fact that graphic novels should be judged on different criteria and should be recognized as a different medium, that they are not just books with illustrations.

Several of the participants in Priest’s study said that they would “want to read the whole thing before putting it on the shelves” (p. 12). One of the participants even noted, “I’m not really comfortable just picking [graphic novels] like this.... I would want reviews to back my decisions and in case of a complaint” (p. 39). Another said that “I’d really like a review” (p. 34).

In her 2006 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s SILS Master’s Paper entitled “Librarians’ Attitudes and Perspectives Regarding Graphic Novels,” Emily Horner examined North Carolina public librarians’ attitudes towards graphic novels and comic books, and how those attitudes affect their collecting of these titles. She conducted interviews to redundancy with seven public librarians working in Youth Services in North Carolina’s Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill public libraries. Most of the librarians Horner interviewed had positive attitudes about comic books and graphic novels (p. 18), and most felt they had “educational value” (p. 21). All seven of the interviewed librarians indicated that graphic novels appealed to patrons who were not avid readers (p. 18). They also favored collecting graphic novels because patrons requested them and because they were “bait to lure young people into the library” (p. 19). A few of the librarians did not feel that graphic novels were any different from any other type of material collected. One librarian said, “I don’t see it any different than the paperback books we have, or the hardback books, or the magazines we have” (p. 20). Horner’s interviews found that although the interviewed librarians did not read graphic novels for pleasure, several did attempt to keep up with popular and new graphic novel titles, by reading reviews, visiting comic books stores, and talking with patrons about them (p. 23).

Clare Snowball's 2007 study on "Researching graphic novels and their teenage readers" provided some interesting insights into some factors that influence how librarians do (or do not) collect comic books and graphic novels, and how those factors fit in to the culture of their individual organizations. Snowball surveyed librarians in various regions of Australia to examine factors shaping these librarians' graphic novel collecting habits. She notes such common negative factors as fear in the community and librarians' lack of familiarity with the format. She also discusses common positive factors that encourage librarians to collect them. Although the study took place in Australia, her findings confirm the influence of some variables explored in studies of North Carolina children's and young adult's comic book and graphic novel collections.

Jessica Gill's 2007 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's SILS Master's Paper "Establishing an Elementary Graphic Novel Collection: An Analysis of the Most Frequently Utilized Collection Development Resources" addresses how elementary school librarians in North Carolina establish a comic book and graphic novel collection. She used a purposive sample of economically diverse North Carolina elementary schools located in the Raleigh-Durham area. It is not stated whether these librarians were public or private school librarians. Gill surveyed North Carolina elementary school library media specialists to determine which collection development tools these media specialists use when they establish a graphic novel collection, and which tools they found most effective. Gill analyzed results from 65 returned surveys. Additionally, she interviewed 15 media specialists to gather more data.

Gill found that the North Carolina media specialists in her study most often used professional journals, recommended title lists, and recommendations from other media specialists when selecting comic book and graphic novel titles. Least used tools were recommendations from comic book stores, public librarians, and library professors (Gill, front matter). Gill's paper notes that "additional research could be done which would look at the characteristics of media specialists who add graphic novels to their collections, as well as the characteristics of media specialists who elect not to.... Questions could be posed about if there were any commonalities regarding individuals who select to purchase graphic novels" (p. 28). The results were not cross tabulated or correlated with other factors. Gill's study notes that "blogs, websites, and professional books specific only to an elementary level are all desired [as articulated by the school librarians participating in the study]. Research done on collection development tools in five to ten years may well indicate a prevalence of these..." (p. 29). Gill also argues that, since the librarians she studied relied on other school librarians for recommendations for building their collections, therefore workshops, conferences, and professional learning communities provide excellent opportunities for these conversations to take place (p. 30).

Methodologies for Evaluating Library Collections

There are many methodologies for evaluating library collections. They include evaluating according to circulation usage, items' physical wear and tear, number of

citations in research papers' bibliographies, feedback from users, age of items, inter-library loan requests, relevance of information, book reviews, using deductive and inductive checklists, comparisons with class curriculums, and in-depth case studies (Moss, 2008, p. 149).

In the most commonly used method of collection evaluation (Elzy & Lancaster, 1990, p. 1), a collection is checked against a specified list of titles. Using a deductive checklist to search the OPAC for the presence of specific titles, a library's collection is then assessed based on the gaps that are exposed by missing titles. Anna Lundin's 1989 article "List-Checking in Collection Development" describes the use of checklists in collection evaluation, and reviews the library literature about the use of checklists. She notes that while they are frequently used, many librarians are skeptical about their drawbacks. Lundin advises using them, but with a caveat: they are better for smaller libraries with "more specialized goals" (p. 108), which did make these deductive checklists appropriate for this study. Lundin also points out that lists are a basic form of communication among libraries and scholars and that they help constitute the "art" of collection building (p. 111).

In reaction to the limitations of the deductive checklist, Herbert Goldhor developed the method of using inductive checklists to evaluate a library collection. He discusses the application of this method in his oft-cited 1973 article "Analysis of an Inductive Method of Evaluating the Book Collection of a Public Library." In contrast to a deductive checklist method, which exposes gaps in the collection (Elzy & Lancaster, p. 1), an inductive checklist looks at what a library has. This method has the advantage of taking into account items that perhaps should not have been collected and so provides a bigger picture than the deductive method (Elzy & Lancaster, p. 2). The use of an inductive checklist involves sampling the collection, for example, by using a sampling interval after a random start (Elzy & Lancaster, 1990, p. 3), and then checking the sample against a similarly selected sample from several published bibliographies (Elzy & Lancaster, 1990, p. 4). Titles in the sample are compared against selected bibliographies; the more bibliographies that include the title, the more "stars" or points that title could earn. If that title is not included in any of the selected bibliographies, then the title would earn no stars.

One disadvantage of this inductive method is that a title may be of high quality but is now out-of-print, and so is less likely to appear in recommended bibliographies (Elzy & Lancaster, 1990, p. 5). Goldhor argues that it is more important to consider what a title's value is to the modern audience than when it was published (p. 13). To correct for this problem of out-of-print titles that may still have value but are not awarded "stars," Elzy and Lancaster's study then compared the sample to four other large, similar academic collections in the same state and awarded "stars" for items held in the other collections (p. 5). In her use of a Goldhor-inspired inductive evaluation of the gay / lesbian/ bisexual / trans ("GLBT") literature holdings in a public library, Eleanor Moss argued in her 2008 article "An Inductive Evaluation of a Public Library GLBT Collection" that, given the

vulnerabilities of the deductive checklist method, an inductive checklist was more likely to provide a more comprehensive overview of a given collection. Moss used three lists and a stratified sample to determine the percentage of core desirable GLBT titles that Louisville Public Library held. She noted that a significant disadvantage of using the inductive method for her study was that this method depends on excellent subject heading in cataloging; certain titles were not located due to faulty headings (p. 155). A deductive checklist method does not have this disadvantage.

Elzy and Lancaster's 1990 study "Looking at a collection in different ways" evaluated the collection at Illinois State University's Teaching Materials Center (TMC). The researchers used both inductive and deductive checklists to compare results derived from the two checklist methodologies. They used four different bibliographies to check the titles in the collection; none of the four bibliographies had been used as a book selection tool at TMC. The researchers concluded that the two methodologies were effective in indicating areas of weakness in the collection, in different ways. The deductive checklist indicated gaps that should be filled by purchase of recommended books; the inductive checklist indicated that TMC had too many books that were not highly recommended (Elzy & Lancaster, 1990, p. 9).

Russell Dennison's 2000 article "Quality Assessment of Collection Development Through Tiered Checklists: Can You Prove You Are a Good Collection Developer?" examines using tiered checklists to make results of a deductive checklist study less subjective and therefore more usable and more valuable. In the usage of tiered checklists, titles are divided into several categories, such as "essential," "highly recommended," "recommended," and "listed" (p. 25). Using existing checklists from qualified organizations or databases, titles checked for in the collection are classified into the top tier if they appear in four lists; on the next tier if they appear on three lists, and so on. Statistical analysis is then applied to reduce the subjectivity of results interpretation.

In Donahue's, Johnson's, Mandarino's, and Usiondek's 2010 "Graphic Novel Collection Evaluation: Designing a Three-Part Instrument to Evaluate the Usability and Accessibility of a Library's Graphic Novel Collection" study, the researchers observed what this study's examination of the literature has found: "While graphic novel collections have grown quickly over the past ten years, a lot of the literature covers how to build a collection, but not much has been written on how to evaluate and maintain a collection" (p. 2). The researchers created a three-part data collection instrument to evaluate library graphic novel collections in three different ways. Two parts of the instrument analyzed the usability of the database to locate comic books and graphic novels and the physical condition of the comic book and graphic novel copies. The third part of the instrument was an inductive checklist method based on Eleanor Moss's and Goldhor's research. Donahue et. al. searched for total number of titles held under the heading "graphic novels" and then calculated a percentage by dividing the number of books found on the best lists by the total number of graphic novels owned. Donahue et. al.

decided that 20 – 25% of the titles should ideally be from the “best” list. This percentage was derived after discussion; it is often used in deductive checklisting.

Glenn Masuchika and Gail Boldt’s 2010 study, “Japanese Manga in Translation and American Graphic Novels: A Preliminary Examination of the Collections in 44 Academic Libraries,” sought to gather data indicating whether, given the popularity of Japanese manga comic books in the U.S., American academic libraries were collecting manga to the same extent that they were collecting American graphic novels. The authors argued that if they weren’t, this would indicate a Western bias, noting that manga’s popularity should require an aggressive collecting rate. The authors did determine that there is a strong bias among academic American libraries in favor of Western graphic novels; their research indicated that graphic novels are collected five times as much as manga (p. 515), although manga sales are a much higher percentage of comic book sales than 20%. The authors furthermore determined that schools located in areas with significant Asian populations, or with respected Japanese studies departments, also collected graphic novels much more heavily than they did manga (p. 515). The researchers used 17 lists to derive their titles. The researchers also describe how they intentionally included certain universities known as centers of Japanese studies, to determine whether they would collect manga at higher rates.

Evidence of AASL Standards for the Twenty-First Century Learner on Independent North Carolina School Library Webpages

The American Association of School Libraries delineates five instructional strands in the “Teaching for Learning” section of *Empowering Learners*, its 2009 landmark guideline for school library media programs. By collecting and promoting comic books and graphic novels, school library media specialists can foster these three of the five goals:

- 1.) The school library media program promotes collaboration among members of the learning community and encourages learners to be independent, lifelong users and producers of ideas and information.
 - 2.) The school library media program promotes reading as a foundational skill for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment.
 - 3.) The school library media program provides instruction that addresses multiple literacies, including information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, and technology literacy
- (AASL, 2009, p. 19).

Jane McMahon’s 2010 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s SILS Master’s Paper, “Evidence of Virtual Learning Commons in Independent School Library Web Pages,” examined twenty-five North Carolina independent school library web pages. McMahon analyzed the content of these web pages to determine whether independent private school libraries in North Carolina were developing as twenty-first century learning commons. McMahon looked for evidence on the web pages of the five instructional strands specified by the American Association of School Libraries’ Standards for the Twenty-first Century Learner: collaboration, reading promotion, multiple literacies,

inquiry-based learning, and librarian assessment of student learning. She concluded that there was some evidence on these library web pages of online resources that can enable these goals, but that there was less evidence that these goals were actually being implemented in or through the libraries (p. 30). She concludes that independent libraries can use their library web pages in the future to be more effective in achieving these standards (p. 30).

Methodology

General Description

This study examined which comic books and graphic novels elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina private schools are collecting, and which factors influence that collecting or correlate with that collecting. This study sought to establish patterns of comic book and graphic novel collecting in these schools in North Carolina according to such variables as professional characteristics of the librarian, librarians' attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels, the tools North Carolina private elementary and middle school librarians use to select comic books and graphic novels, and varying levels of wealth by region of the state. To triangulate the data, this study was designed in two parts: in one part, data was collected from 20 schools' library web pages and OPACs; in the second part, library workers in various private elementary and middle schools all over North Carolina were surveyed.

The survey sought to explore how and why private school librarians do or do not collect comic books and graphic novels; factors that influence whether they select certain titles; which comic books and graphic novels they think private elementary and middle school libraries should collect; which titles they actually do collect; classification questions about their school population; and the professional characteristics of the surveyed librarians, including whether the surveyed librarians are implementing the AASL's Standards for the Twenty-first Century Learner in their library curriculum, and whether the participating librarians are technology or curriculum leaders in their schools. These answers were cross-tabulated and examined for correlations with such things as size of the graphic novel collection, whether the librarian had an MLS, types of professional reading, whether the librarians read comic books as a child or teen, whether the librarian had a school library website, and the librarians' relationship with technology. There were six data collection instruments: two OPAC checklists, three rubrics for noting the presence of three categories of indicators of the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner on school library web pages, and the survey. There has been no published research that correlates these factors with the collecting of graphic novels or comic books in private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina.

Methodology and Goals of This Study in Relation to the Library Literature

This study built on Horner's 2006 research into North Carolina public librarians' attitudes by attempting to gauge a variety of attitudes among private school elementary and middle school librarians who are collecting for a spectrum of young and youthful children, often in a religious setting. Public librarians have the luxury of collecting more

controversial materials than their private school librarian counterparts. Horner notes that “the interviewed librarians seemed less concerned with the sex and violence stereotypically associated with comic books, and more concerned with portrayals of women” (p. 24). This study examined whether private school librarians’ perceptions of sex, violence, and portrayals of women, as well as their perception that comic books and graphic novels lead to more reading, influence the way private school librarians collect comic books and graphic novels in North Carolina. While Horner states that “the library literature increasingly shows an attitude that ... is ready to accept comics as a positive source of reading material, and this is also true of the librarians who participated in this study” (p. 30), this study was designed to determine whether private elementary and middle school librarians collecting in schools located in counties with a wide range of socioeconomic levels, and with different religious profiles, had those same positive attitudes.

Furthermore, of the seven librarians Horner interviewed, six had rarely read comics as children and did not read them regularly now (p. 22). The seventh librarian was an avid reader of comic books and also had read them extensively as a child (p. 22). The other six librarians had only read *Archie* or the newspaper comic strips (p. 22). This study collected data to seek a correlation between private school librarians who read comic books as children and those who collect them heavily and promote them now. This survey also asked respondents which comic book titles they had read as children. Although they did not read comic books for pleasure, several of the librarians in Horner’s study did attempt to keep up with popular and new comic book and graphic novel titles, by reading reviews, visiting comic books stores, and talking with patrons about it (p. 23). This study examined whether private school elementary and middle school librarians do this as well, and which tools they use to stay current with comic books, even if they are not fans of the format themselves.

This study built on Horner’s study by attempting to gauge attitudes of librarians who collect comic books, and how that affects their collecting. Horner interviewed public librarians “mostly in Orange, Durham, and Wake counties” of North Carolina (p. 15); however, Wake County librarians do not select materials. In Wake County, materials are selected by a centralized office, Collection Development Services. Horner’s 2006 study provided meaningful, useful data, but did not distinguish attitudes based on each county’s collecting model. The Horner interviews provide insight into public North Carolina librarians’ attitudes about graphic novels, but since some of them do not select, it is not possible from that study to correlate their attitudes toward comic books with how and what they collect. This study was designed to build on the excellent qualitative responses Horner’s interviews elicited, and attempted to link attitudes of children’s and young adult librarians working in North Carolina with purchasing decisions.

This research attempted to fill in some of the gaps Jessica Gill noted in her 2007 study on selection tools, by investigating characteristics of North Carolina school librarians and seeking patterns according to these media specialists’ characteristics and collecting of

graphic novels and comic books. This study also looked at the selection tools used by private elementary and middle school librarians when developing their comic book and graphic novels collections; it is not clear whether Gill's data includes this group of librarians.

This study, which took place five years after Gill's, also followed up on her recommendation to investigate whether private school librarians in North Carolina build their comic book and graphic novel collections by utilizing workshops, conferences, blogs, websites, and professional books with comic book and graphic novel recommendations. Respondents in Priest's study, which explored the decision-making process of some North Carolina school librarians as they selected comic books and graphic novels, mentioned several selection tools they used. This research was designed to illuminate which selection tools private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina use, how often they use those tools, and correlations of the use of those tools to other factors. This was also designed to build on Priest's research by examining whether, ten years later and as our society is more multi-media driven, there is evidence that a shift has occurred among private school librarians in recognizing that comic books and graphic novels are valuable books intrinsically, or whether they are still viewed as desirable because they are stepping stones to "real" books.

In order to explore some of the theories of Clare Snowball's studies of teenage readers of graphic novels in Australia, this study also looked for patterns of comic book and graphic novel collecting according to region and perceived negative attitudes in the school community about comic books and graphic novels, and whether that prevented some librarians in this study from purchasing them.

Similar to the way that Masuchika and Boldt wanted to investigate whether there was a correlation between richer manga collecting in academic libraries belonging to schools that had Asian studies concentrations, this study sought to investigate how comic book and graphic novel collecting fits in with school libraries that are supposed to be preparing their students for the twenty-first century. In other words, to what extent are these materials, well-suited to the twenty-first century learners, who are immersed in a highly visual and multi-media culture, being provided to those twenty-first century learners in private elementary and middle schools? This study's survey and OPAC analysis sought to correlate comic book collecting with characteristics of twenty-first century school library programs, such as library websites that offer students the ability to use Web 2.0 tools, and school librarians that offer curriculum and technology workshops to the teachers. There was also a survey question that asked whether the respondent included the AASL Standards in his or her library curriculum. I then performed cross-tabulations and sought to make connections with that answer and results from other survey items.

Data Collection Instruments

To examine which comic book and graphic novel titles elementary and middle school librarians collect in private schools in North Carolina, this study included two deductive checklists to analyze OPACs of twenty private elementary and middle school libraries in various regions in North Carolina. The OPAC checklist titles were based on recommendations from lists compiled by comic book experts, school library media specialists, library literature article authors, website authors, and monograph authors. They included award winners, popular titles, titles that meet published criteria for quality comic books, and titles that appear on multiple recommended lists. Their presence in a collection would indicate a quality graphic novel and comic book collection. Like Masuchika and Boldt, I used several lists to make this study's list, since there is a lack of an agreed-upon canon in comic books and graphic novels for elementary and middle school libraries. Among others, the recommended comic book and graphic novel lists of Michele Gorman, Allison and Barry Lyga, Francisca Goldsmith, David Serchay, Diana Maliszewski, and Gene Kannenberg, Jr. were all consulted in choosing the titles for the two OPAC checklists. I then checked for the presence of twenty "desirable" comic book and graphic novel titles in the elementary schools, and twenty "desirable" titles in the middle school. Schools that had both an elementary and middle school were evaluated using both checklists. (See Appendix F, "Deductive Comic Book and Graphic Novel Checklist for Elementary Schools," and Appendix G, "Deductive Comic Book and Graphic Novel Checklist for Middle Schools.")

Three of the titles were repeated on both lists. *Bone* is probably the one graphic novel title that school libraries must have. *Tintin* is a core title that represents a beloved classic, and I was curious to determine whether school libraries were likely to have it, especially since the popular movie was just released. Its presence also indicated a school library with an interest in collecting international and critically acclaimed titles. *To Dance* is an award-winning autobiography that is often considered Young Adult, but its artwork seems more appropriate for younger audiences. It is an important title, appearing on many lists, and I thought including it was important, but I knew librarians might differ on which level library should collect it. Therefore I thought it appropriate to search for it in both types of libraries. Schools that had any of these duplicated titles received "credit" twice for it when I calculated the scores, so that they were not penalized for having the title.

Once I checked for the presence of the desired titles, I sought to establish correlations with other characteristics of the school and its library. For example, I correlated the OPAC checklist findings with the school's religious affiliation, and whether it belonged to a wealthy county, one of the state's twelve poorest counties, or a county in another region of the state. I also performed a content analysis of the library website and looked for evidence of several of AASL's Standards for the 21st Century Learner, as evidenced by three different ways of carrying out those standards. Specifically, I looked for evidence of student use of Web 2.0 tools and evidence of reading promotion and comic book promotion through the library website. I used three tools to gather this data, and I

tallied indicators of these elements, some of which are derived from Jane McMahon's 2010 University of North Carolina's SILS Master's Paper study "Evidence of Virtual Learning Commons in Independent School Library Web Pages."

To establish evidence of Web 2.0 tools facilitated by the school librarian, I used Appendix A, "Evidence of Reading Promotion in Library Webpages." I looked on the library website for student wikis, blogs, social networking, and interactive reading tools.

To look for evidence of reading promotion, I used Appendix B, "Evidence of Web 2.0 Tools in school Library Webpages." I looked for recommended book lists, links to other libraries, readers' advisory tools, reading-related video or podcasts, reading-related wikis, and information about new materials.

I also used Appendix C, "Evidence of Comic Book Promotion on Library Website," to look for evidence that the librarian was promoting graphic novels and comic books as desirable reading choices, by checking to see whether there was any information about new comic book materials; projects involving comic books; links to comic book websites, stores, or blogs; research about comic books; recommended comic books; or librarian or student blog postings about comic books. I assigned a point to each of these indicators.

In order to triangulate the data collected from the OPAC analyses, I also distributed a survey to private elementary and middle school librarians all over North Carolina. The survey method was appropriate for my study for several reasons. First, I was seeking to connect factors influencing and correlating with the collecting of comic books and graphic novels. A web-based Qualtrics survey facilitated using statistics to correlate librarians' survey answers with other variables and look for patterns to draw meaningful conclusions. Web-based surveys, in contrast to phone interviews or face-to-face interviews, help eliminate bias as much as possible. I am an enthusiastic advocate for graphic novels and comic books, and I think that if I were to conduct personal interviews, I would have difficulty appearing neutral, avoiding leading questions, or not giving emotional responses to subjects' answers. Another advantage of the Qualtrics web-based survey is that participants can pace themselves (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 260): Qualtrics provides the option to save and go back to it later, which I hoped would encourage a greater completion rate and more well-thought-out responses. This is also appropriate for busy school librarians, who are often interrupted by classes to teach and multiple demands for help and service from students, teachers, and administrators. Furthermore, a web-based survey can be distributed throughout a wide region (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 260), which suited my study well, since I wanted to survey different areas throughout the state. Web-based surveys are also cost-effective (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 260), which was appropriate for this study, which has no grant funding. Moreover, they provide the shortest collection times of any surveys (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 260). The short collection time was excellent for this study since I had to analyze the data from many schools, analyze data from five website and OPAC

instruments and one survey instrument, and also interpret time-consuming, open-ended responses, within a short time.

The majority of the survey questions were close-ended. As Wildemuth points out, close-ended questions are easier for respondents and require less time to analyze (p. 258). This is important due to the fact that this study was time-intensive due to the use of two data collection instruments, due to the collection of qualitative data in the open-ended survey question responses, which were time-consuming to analyze, and due to the limited nature of the scope and time allowed for this study. There were seven open-ended questions to elicit deeper responses. Appendix E has the schedule of survey questions.

I also would have liked to collect data about each library's total comic book holdings. I could have done this by searching holdings under the Library of Congress subject headings "comic books, strips, etc.," "graphic novels," and "cartoons and comics." However, many books that are truly comic books are not cataloged under this heading, such as wordless books composed of comic book panels and non-fiction titles. Other comic books might also be present in the collection, but might lack accurate subject headings. I decided to forgo seeking totals of comic books and graphic novel obtained through OPAC subject heading searches in light of the false positives and false negatives this search could produce.

Identifying and Recruiting the Participants

To make the sample as representative as possible, I wanted to make sure that data was collected from regions all over North Carolina, from schools in counties with varying economic levels, and from religious and non-religious schools. There are 82 schools in the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools. Of these, 70 schools met the study criteria of being either elementary or middle school or both, with a school library. The NCAIS website membership role of the schools indicates which geographic regions the schools occupy; the member schools come from all over the state: Charlotte, the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill region, the Coastal Plain, the Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem area, the mountains, the northern coastal plains, the Piedmont, the Sandhills, and the Southern Coastal Plains. Although the Charlotte metropolitan area and the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area have a disproportionately large number of the member schools in this organization, I included all of the schools in Charlotte and the schools in Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill. This is because I was interested in gathering and analyzing data about these two areas of the state, since they have a large concentration of wealth, and contrasting them with the data from the schools in the twelve poorest counties of North Carolina, as well as data from other regions of North Carolina.

I also sent the survey to all of the available email addresses of the school librarians whose email addresses were on the distribution list of those who annually attend the North Carolina Independent Schools Librarians' Network Event, sponsored by the NCSLMA. Some of these librarians' schools appear on the roles of the NCAIS and the list

of the schools in the twelve poorest counties in North Carolina, but some do not. The librarians in this group represent a wide mixture of schools with various economic profiles from various geographic regions in North Carolina. I also hoped that surveying this group would help increase the response rate I would receive. Since some of these librarians know me and attended a school library workshop I taught that was well received, I hoped they would be more motivated to complete the survey.

Using only the NCAIS and North Carolina Independent School Librarians' Network Event membership roll potentially introduced bias into the sample, as this would select only schools that had ample funds and administration time to cultivate and join such organizations. It would also exclude schools that want to shape their own curriculum according to their values, which they may not feel are aligned with a larger organization. This is especially true since many private schools are founded to adhere to a religious mission or a parent charter vision. Often, these schools are alternatives to the bigger educational school system with which they disagree for various reasons.

I therefore wanted to include in the study schools not identified with a professional organization or professional learning network, and not located in the wealthiest regions of the state, so I could have a more representative sample of the state's school libraries and could try to detect patterns of comic book collecting by the wealth of North Carolina schools. I used U.S. census data to identify the twelve poorest counties in North Carolina: Pitt, Robeson, Columbus, Hertford, Northampton, Halifax, Warren, Vance, Scotland, Tyrell, Edgecomb, and Richmond. Next I consulted the *North Carolina Atlas and Gazetteer*, the online Yellow Pages, and the Internet, in order to locate the 150 townships, towns, and cities in those twelve counties. The North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education's 2011 Directory of Non-Public Schools yielded 68 private schools in the 12 poorest counties. I located 20 additional schools from the 12 poorest counties that did not appear in the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education's 2011 Directory of Non-Public Schools by searching through the Yellow Pages listings of the 150 townships, towns, and cities of these counties, using the search term "private schools" combined with the name of the township, towns, and cities. Using the Yellow Pages led me to schools I might not have found if I had searched for school websites online, since many of these smaller schools in the poorer North Carolina counties do not to have a school website and do not appear in NCDNPE's directory. Thus I constructed a sampling frame of 88 private elementary or middle schools in the twelve poorest counties that I could contact for the survey and look at for the OPAC analysis. After researching further, this frame was reduced to 62 after eliminating "private schools" that were day care centers, out of business, or not educational centers.

Most of the schools in the twelve poorest counties were not listed in any of the roles of the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools and did not send librarians to the annual North Carolina Independent School Librarians' Network Event. This lack of overlap satisfied me that I had a potentially wide breadth of private schools to survey and examine.

Each of the twelve poorest counties had varying numbers of private schools. Some counties had many, others had few. For example, Halifax County had five private schools; Pitt County had 15; Robeson had 14. However, some had as few as 3 or 2. Two (Tyrell and Edgecomb counties) had no private schools. In order to reduce bias from the large range among this group of counties, I decided to survey a similar number from each county. I planned to select 5 from each county. In cases where counties had fewer than 5 private schools, I planned to survey them all. Within that total, I planned to break the schools down into strata according to whether they are independent or religious, and to strive to survey an equal number of independent and religious schools. I would have liked to have surveyed all 62 of these schools, since there is no recorded data of these counties' schools collecting of comic books and graphic novels. However, due to time constraints, I had to sample this group.

For the OPAC part of the study, I had originally planned to create a systemic sample of the NCAIS schools that met the OPAC study criteria – private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina with both a Library Media Center (LMC) web page, and an OPAC – by choosing schools randomly, after they had been divided into four regions of economic wealth. I used random.org, a random number generator web site, to select schools for the OPAC study, after dividing schools into categories of either coming from the Wake/ Durham/ Orange counties or the Mecklenberg county (the two most wealthy areas), from the twelve poorest counties, or from the rest of the state's regions. I did this in order to achieve a representative sample from all over the state, with schools of various levels of resources included. However, as I looked at school after school on the NCAIS list, and generated several random selections using the random.org site, I found that few NCAIS middle and elementary schools had both an OPAC and a library web page. I ultimately had to examine all seventy of them in order to find the sixteen that had both an OPAC and a LMC web page. This discovery was unexpectedly informative about the lack of online access many students in private North Carolina elementary and middle schools have to their school library's holdings information. Twenty of the 70 had an OPAC, but not an OPAC combined with a SLMC web page. (See Figure #1.)

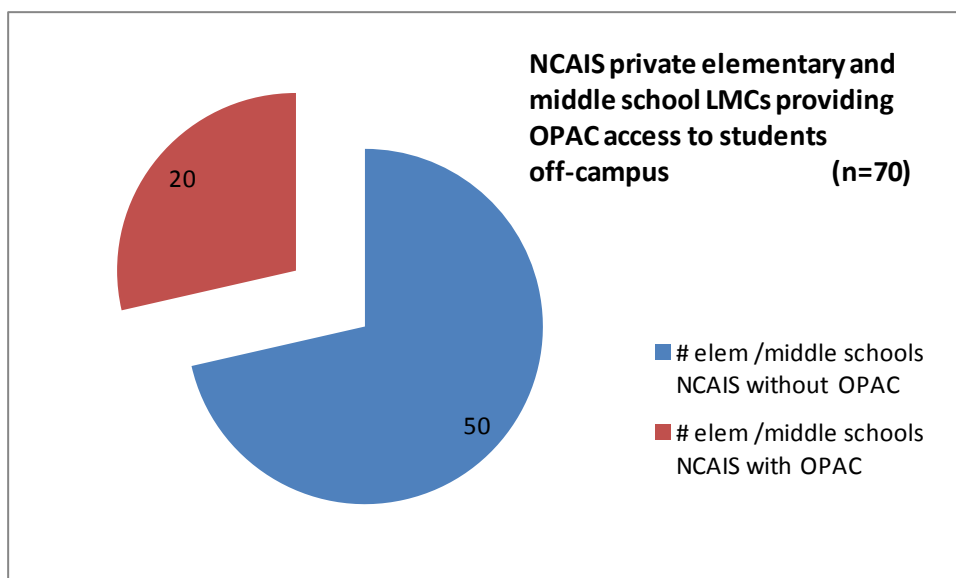


Figure 1: NCAIS private elementary and middle school LMCs providing OPAC access to students online

Thirty-one of the NCAIS elementary and / or middle schools had LMC web page; 39 did not. (See Figure #2.)

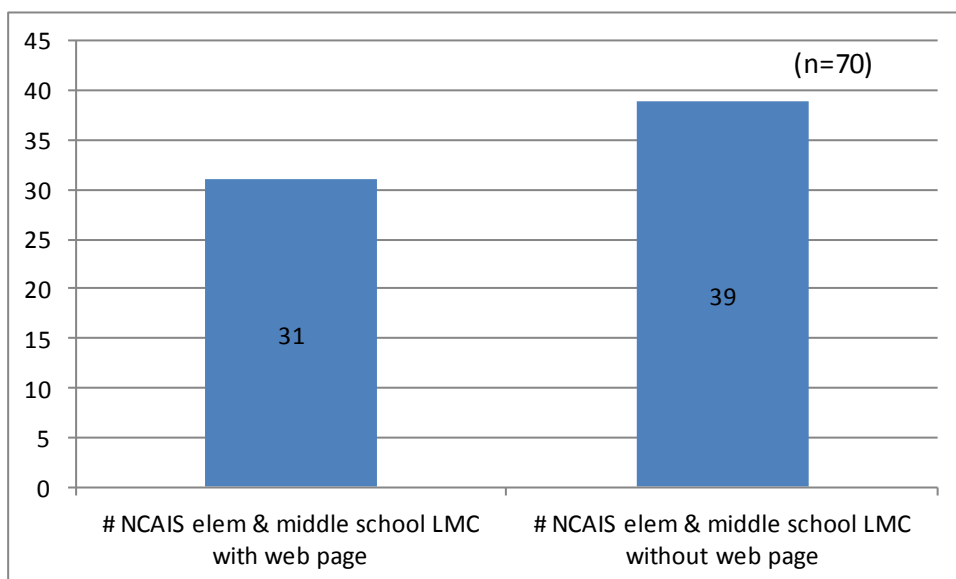


Figure 2: NCAIS elementary and middle school libraries with a LMC web page

I was not able to choose the schools as randomly as I'd hoped, since I had to use any I could find to compose a large enough sample. I added the one school from the twelve poorest counties that had both an OPAC and a LMC web page, and three more religious schools, since of the original sixteen NCAIS schools, only four of those were religious, in order to obtain a total of twenty OPACs and LMC web pages to examine.

Representativeness of the Sample

Due to issues of access, this OPAC sample probably is not the most representative of all possible catalog holdings samples among North Carolina's private elementary and middle schools. Eighteen of the twenty collections are either located in a school that belongs to a professional membership, or are administered by an individual who belongs to a professional librarians' network or association. Of the remaining two schools, one was the only school in the twelve poorest counties that fit the OPAC study criteria. The other was a school whose librarian is known to the investigator, and who graciously allowed access to her OPAC to help contribute data to the OPAC analysis. Her school was chosen in part because its LMC has a robust technology program, and it was interesting to compare its LMC technology offerings to its comic book and graphic novel holdings.

Of the twenty schools whose comic book and graphic novel holdings and LMC web pages were examined, five were from the Charlotte area, six were from RDU/CH, eight were from other counties, and one was from one of the twelve poorest counties.

Of the twenty schools that had an OPAC and a LMC web page, eighteen of the schools had at least one librarian with an MLS. One of the remaining two librarians had a doctorate, although the school website didn't say in which subject, and the other one does not have an MLS.¹

A Note about Attempting to Obtain OPAC Data from the Twelve Poorest Counties In North Carolina

I had hoped to include at least ten of the poorest counties' school libraries in the OPAC/LMC web page analysis, but of the 62 schools in these counties that met the criteria of being private and offering elementary and / or middle school grades, only one had both an OPAC and a LMC web page. I had originally attempted to choose ten of the poorest counties' schools randomly by using random.org, but after several attempts of using randomly selected schools from these twelve counties and finding no schools that had both an OPAC and a library web page, I finally researched every one of the sixty-two poorest counties' schools to try to find schools with both LMC web pages and OPACs. It was interesting to note that of those 62 schools in the 12 poorest counties, only a little more than half had a school website (See Figure #3.)

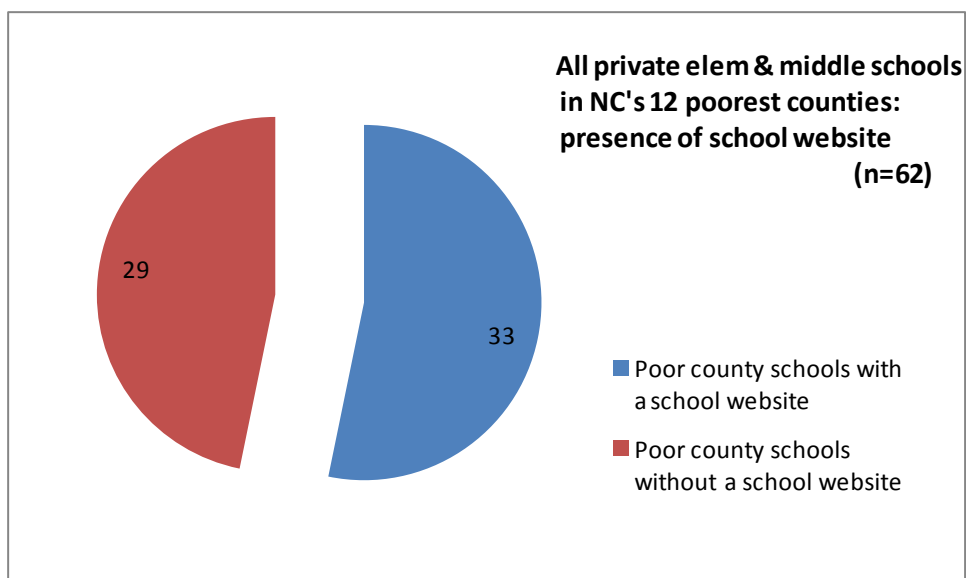


Figure 3: Presence of school website in North Carolina's twelve poorest counties

Only 4 of the 62 schools in these counties had a LMC web page; one was inconclusive as it required a log-in. (See Figure #4.)

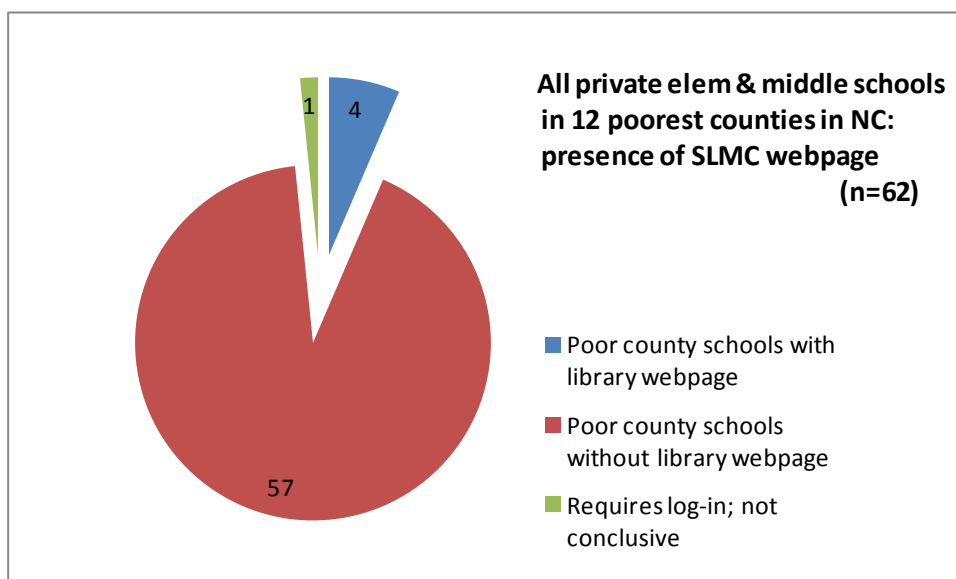


Figure 4: Presence of a school library web page in all private elementary and middle schools in the twelve poorest counties in North Carolina

Only one had both a library web page and an OPAC. (See Figure #5.)

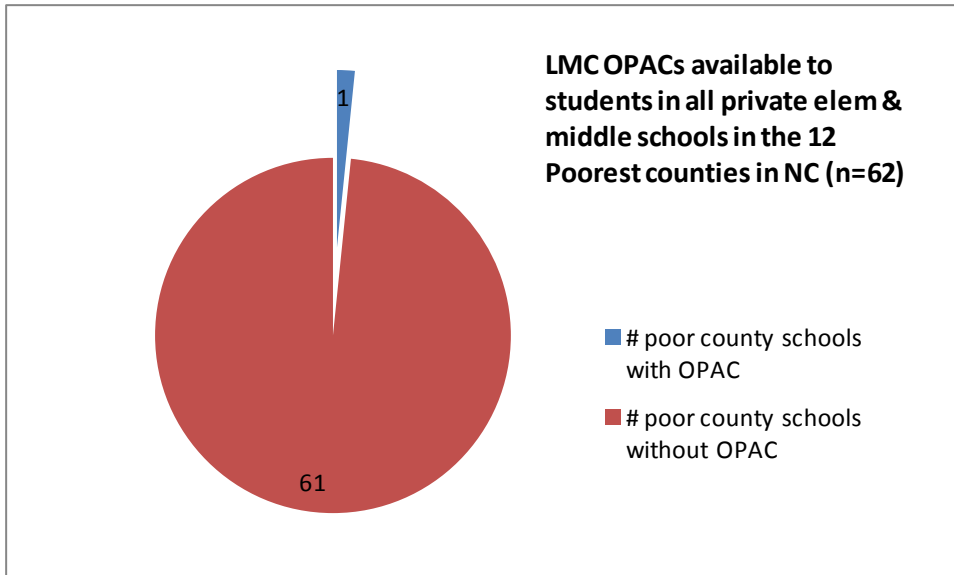


Figure 5: LMC OPACs available to students in all private elementary and middle schools in the 12 poorest counties in North Carolina

Although we clearly cannot generalize about the comic book title holdings in those twelve poor counties based on one library's holdings, it is interesting to note that this particular school had a respectably high score on the comic book checklist, a total significantly higher than several other schools in the study located in wealthy regions.

OPAC and Library Webpage Analysis Results

Results of the Title Checklists: What's Being Collected

To try to gather data about the titles being collected, I devised two deductive checklists: one for elementary titles, and one for middle school titles. These titles included a wide range: popular series, award-winners, quality stand-alone fiction titles, comic strip collections, and titles that appear on multiple core collection lists. (See Appendix F for elementary school OPAC checklist.)

The most collected comic book and graphic novel titles on the elementary checklist were *Babymouse*, *Bone*, *Peanuts*, *Batman*, and *Calvin and Hobbes*. These are all popular, well-known series that often appear on core lists. (Owning one volume of the series was enough to “get credit” for having the series; multiple volumes did not increase the score. (See Figure #6 for a graph of elementary titles collected.)

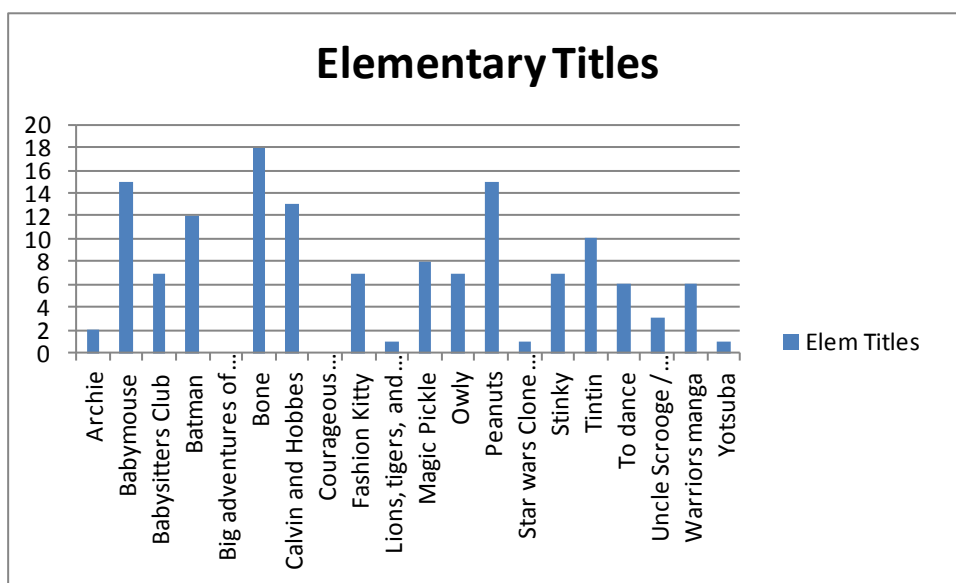


Figure 6: Elementary comic book and graphic novel titles collected by private North Carolina schools in this study

The most collected comic book and graphic novel titles on the middle school checklist were *Bone*, *Spider-Man*, *Tintin*, and *American Born Chinese*. (See Appendix G for middle school OPAC checklist.) (See Figure #7).

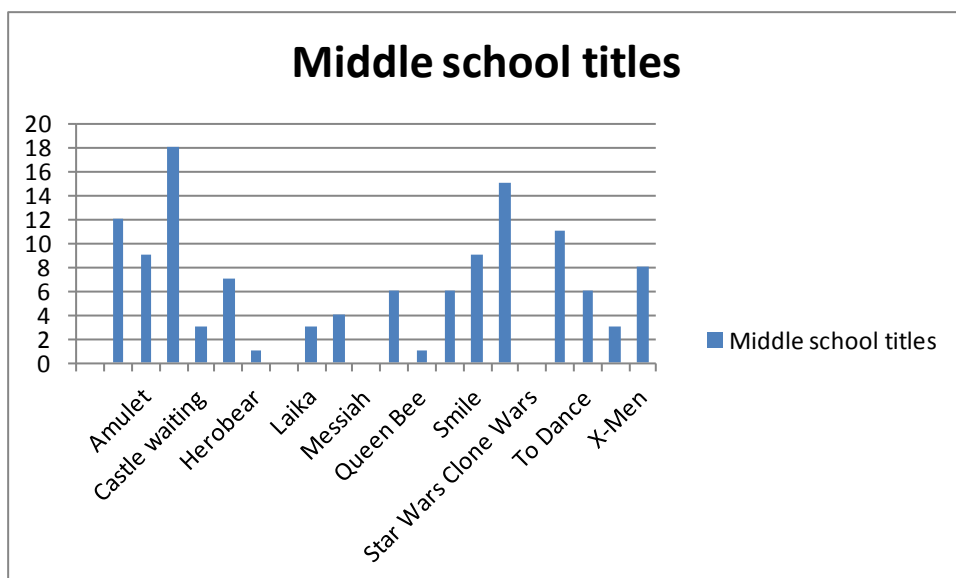


Figure 7: Middle school comic book and graphic novel titles collected by private North Carolina schools in this study

I noticed that a lot of high quality, award-winning stand-alone core titles that appear on numerous core lists are not being collected in high numbers by the North Carolina schools in this study. For example, *Herobear*, *Courageous Princess*, *Usagi Yojimbo*, *Castle Waiting*, *To Dance*, and *Satchel Paige: Striking out Jim Crow* are not being collected heavily. This can be understood in the context of the results of this study's survey, which indicate that the more popular tools for selecting comic books and graphic novels were book reviews, student input, perusing the graphic novel or comic book, and other librarians' recommendations. Much less popular were "published comic book evaluation criteria" (used by 8% of the survey respondents who collect comic books or graphic novels), "books with graphic novel recommended lists" (used by 31% of the survey respondents who collect comic book and graphic novels), list serves (used by 12% of the comic book collecting respondents), and visiting comic book stores (used by 10% of the comic book collecting respondents). I also noticed that the titles I collected for my private elementary and middle school library media center through alternate sources – that is, visiting comic book stores and visiting publishers' displays at professional librarians' conferences – are not selected often. These titles are all popular and / or appear on multiple award and core lists: *Yotsuba*; *Courageous Princess*; *Lions, Tigers, and Bears*; *Star Wars Clone Wars Adventures*; *The Big Adventures of Majoko*; and Disney's *Duck Tales / Uncle Scrooge*. I discovered most of these by visiting a local award-winning comic book store, but only 10% of the (probably very busy) librarians in the survey use that as a collecting tool. More (41%) do collect through "conferences and other professional workshops," but since the survey didn't specifically ask the respondents about publishers' exhibits, and there are a lot of ways to be exposed to titles at professional gatherings, and there is no way to know if these comic book collecting librarians collect through publishers' exhibits.

It was also interesting that *Archie* comics are being collected in such low numbers, when so many of the librarians surveyed who collect comic books and graphic novels said that they read *Archie* when they were children or teenagers. However, this finding does support the fact that the survey results found no correlation between librarians who collect graphic novels and comic books as adults and those who read them as children or teens.

It was also surprising that some very popular series that are appropriate for elementary grades that appear on multiple recommended core lists, such as *Owly*, *Fashion Kitty*, *Yotsuba*, and *Babysitters' Club*, are not collected in high numbers by the schools studied in this survey.

Manga

Each checklist had three manga titles on it. These manga titles are not being collected much by the schools in this study. In the elementary list, I included one title by an independent publisher (*The Big Adventures of Majoko*), one spin-off of a very popular series (Erin Hunter's *Warriors* manga about cats), and one very popular core title series (*Yotsuba*). *Yotsuba* was collected by one school; *Majoko* was collected by none; and *Warriors* was collected by six of the twenty. These librarians collect the *Warriors* books heavily in the traditional all-text format. *Majoko* and *Yotsuba* were not "flipped," that is, they are not reproduced with the panels reading left-to-right, but maintain their original right-to-left orientation, as they were published in Japan. Perhaps some librarians feel it is too difficult for students to read the "genuine" Japanese manga back-to-front, or read right-to-left.

Nor were the manga titles on the middle school checklist being collected heavily. *Usagi Yojimbo* appears on multiple core lists; only three libraries had collected it. None of the eight religious schools had collected *Manga Messiah*, and *Maximum Ride* was collected by four libraries, despite the high prevalence of the traditional all-text format of the original books.

However, most of the schools are collecting some core titles. Fifteen of the elementary schools are collecting core elementary titles other than *Bone* or *Babymouse*, two of the most well-known of the "must-have" core collection elementary titles. (See Figure #8.)

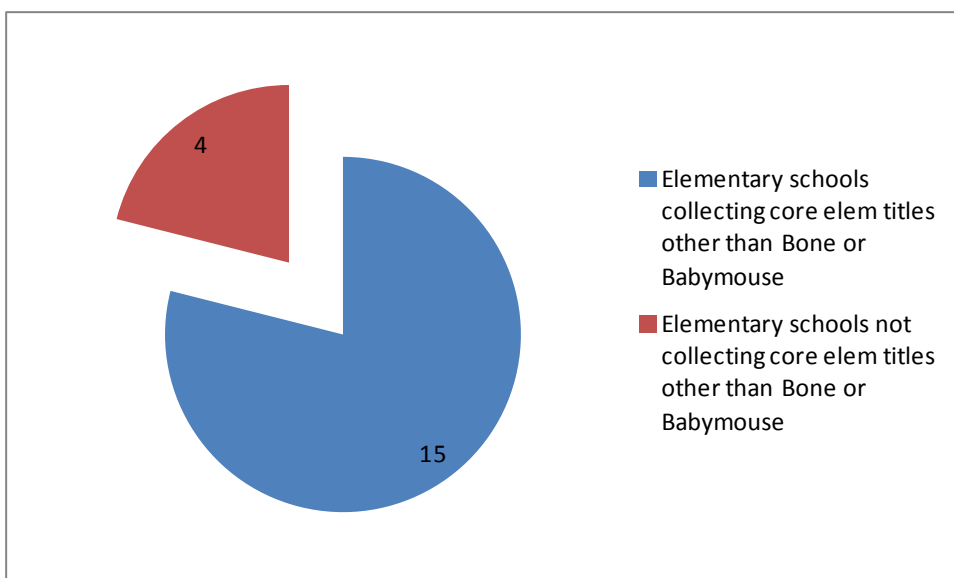


Figure 8: Elementary North Carolina schools in this study collecting core titles other than *Bone* or *Babymouse*

Seventeen of the middle schools are collecting core titles other than *Bone* or *Spider-Man*, two of the most well-known of the “must-have” core middle school collection titles. (See Figure #9.)

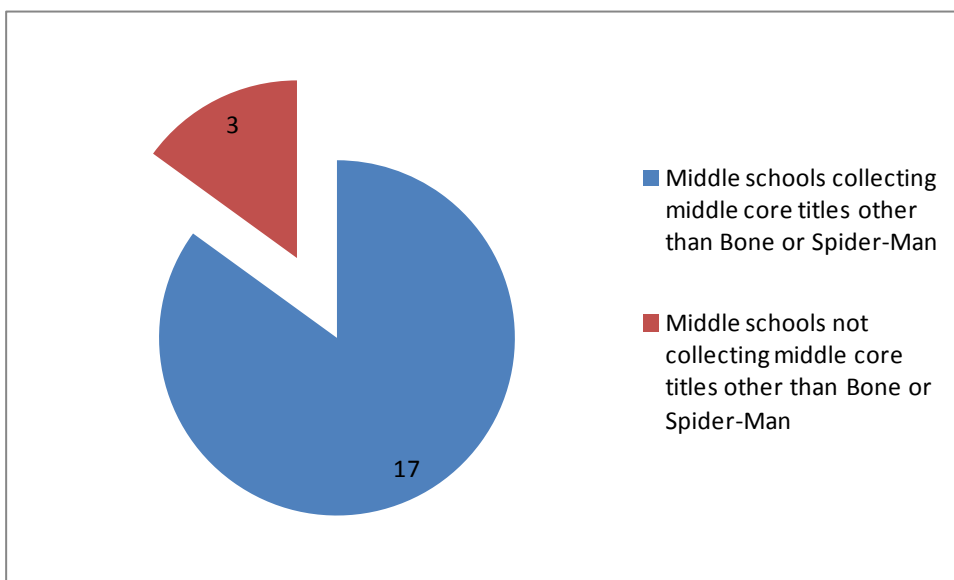


Figure 9: North Carolina middle schools in this study collecting core titles other than *Bone* or *Spider-Man*

In fact, the middle school librarians in our study are collecting award-winners more heavily than they seem to be collecting popular culture spin-offs such as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*.

Results of the Title Checklists: Checklist Scores

Of the twenty schools studied, six scored low on the total checklist scores. ("Low" is defined as less than 10 out of a possible 40 score, or less than 25%.) Of the remaining fourteen "high" scoring schools, four of those were religious, and ten were secular. (See Figure #10.)

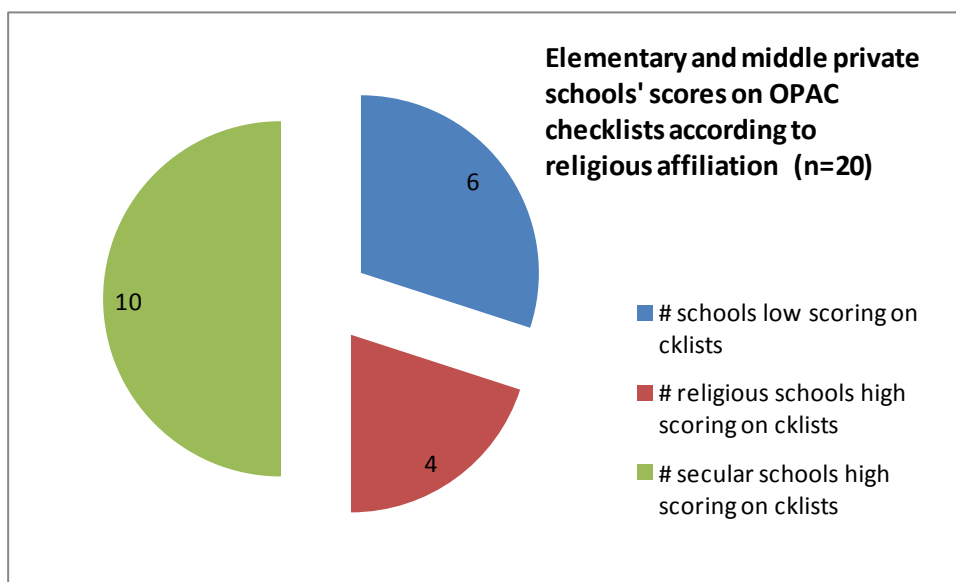


Figure 10: Elementary and middle schools' scores on OPAC checklists

Secular elementary and middle school LMCs in the study tended to have higher checklist scores; they are collecting the titles on the lists more heavily than their religious school counterparts. Some religious schools are collecting heavily too; the religious school libraries in North Carolina in this study tend to have more varied checklist scores. (See Figure #11 and Figure #12.)

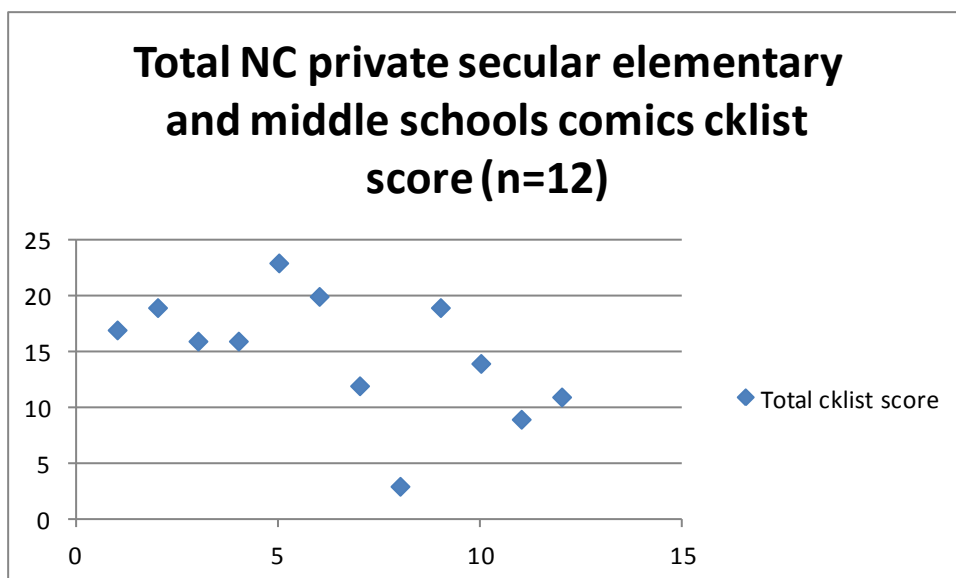


Figure 11: Total North Carolina private secular elementary and middle schools' comic book and graphic novel OPAC checklist scores

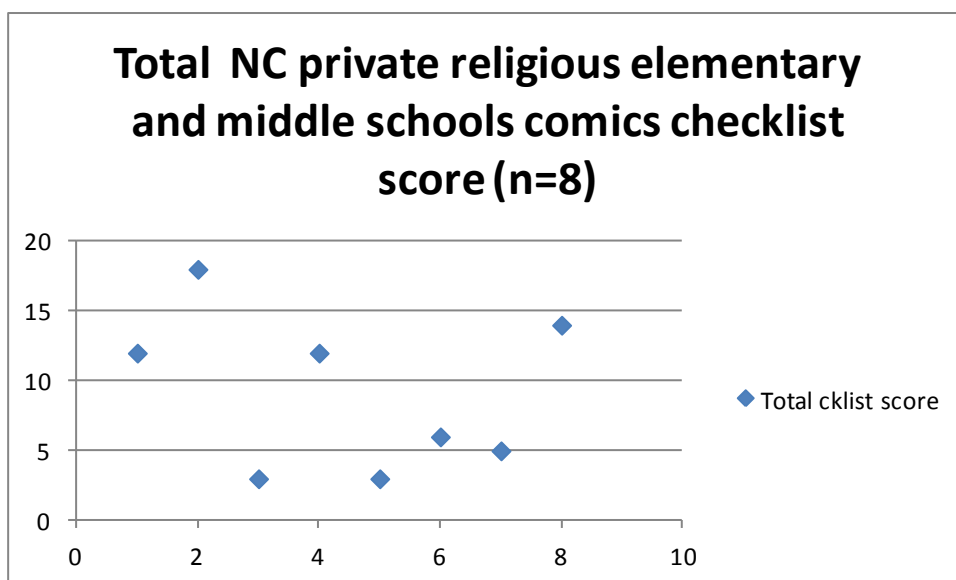


Figure 12: Total North Carolina private religious elementary and middle schools' comic book and graphic novel OPAC checklist scores

It was interesting to compare the modes of these two types of schools: religious schools had a low total checklist score mode value of 3, and a high total checklist score mode value of 12. There is a broad range of checklist scores in the religious schools. In contrast, secular schools had a low total checklist score mode value of 16, and a high total checklist score mode value of 19. (See Figure #13.)

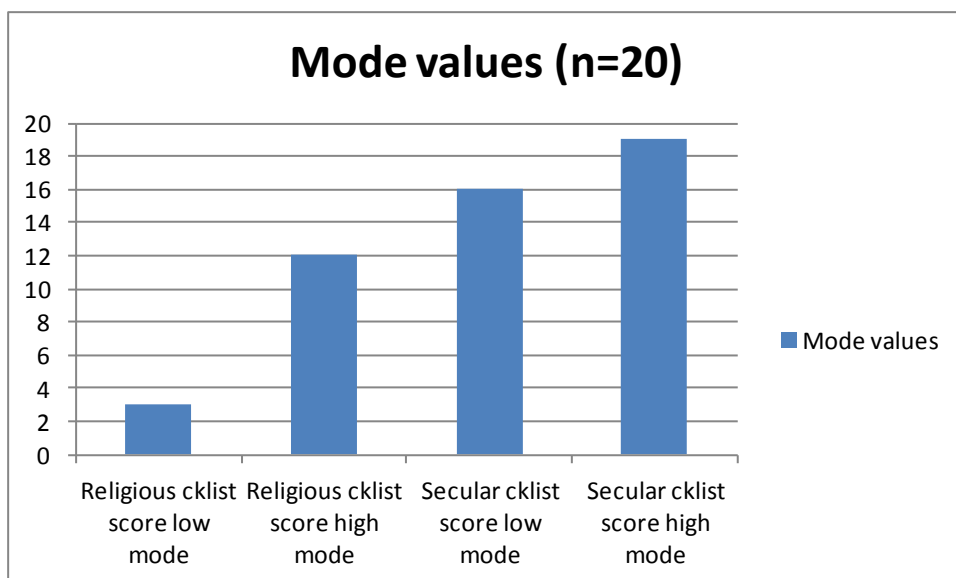


Figure 13: Mode OPAC checklist values of religious and secular private elementary and middle schools

Secular schools also had higher mean and median checklist score values than the religious schools. (See Figure #14.)

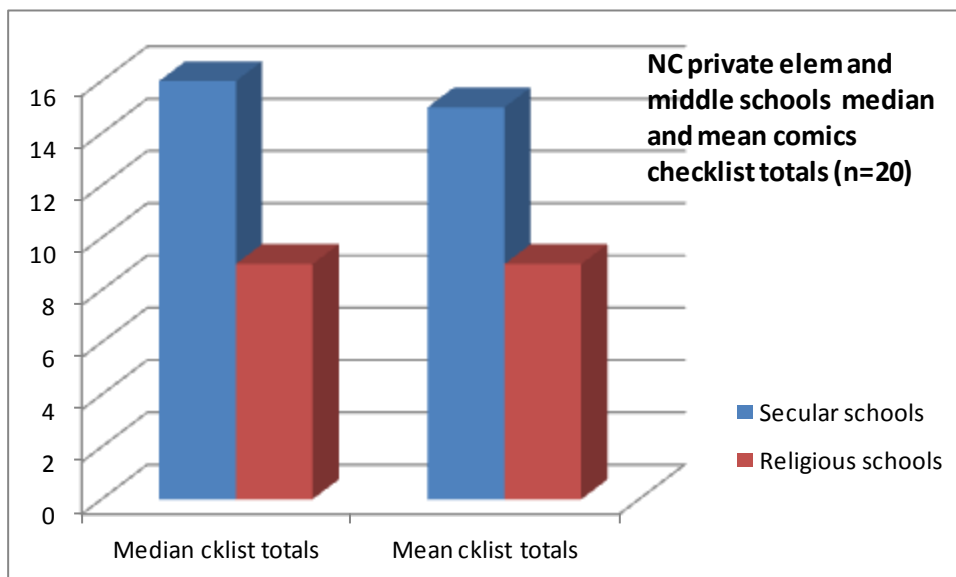


Figure 14: Median and mean OPAC checklist values of religious and secular private elementary and middle schools

The highest score any school in this study received was 23/40.

Correlation of Total Scores with the Student Use of Web 2.0 on the LMC Webpage

I was looking for evidence that might link comic book collecting, which supports AASL's Standards for the Twenty-First Century Learner, with other indicators of school library

media specialists' incorporating those standards into their curriculum. The data collection instrument Appendix B, "Evidence of Web 2.0 Tools in School Library Webpages," used five indicators to measure whether or not the LMC web page had student wikis, student blogs, social networking for students, digital storytelling, or any digital organizing tools. I then compared these scores with schools' comic book checklist scores. I found no correlation with these two behaviors. Half of the schools had no evidence of using 2.0 tools with the students on the LMC web page. These schools had no pattern corresponding to their checklist scores. Seven of the schools had high scores on the combined checklists but no evidence of student Web 2.0 usage; seven others had high scores on their combined checklist scores, and also plentiful student usage of web 2.0. (See Figure #15.)

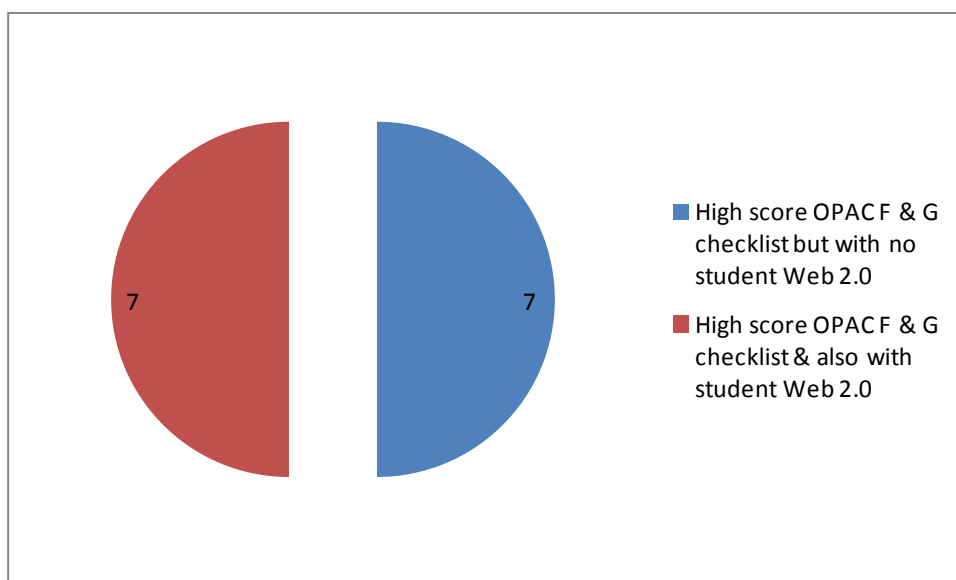


Figure 15: Evidence of student use of Web 2.0 tools on LMC webpages and OPAC comic book and graphic novel checklist scores

Comic Book and Graphic Novel Promoting

I also measured how much the schools were promoting their comic book collections. Using Appendix A that measured reading promotion, I was able to see that many schools promoted reading heavily. However, very few promoted comic books. Of the twenty schools, only three were actively promoting comic books on their web page. "Active" promoting includes evidence such as a librarian or student blog posting about comics, research on the library web page about comics, links to a comic blog or website, a link to a comic book store, a recommended comics list, new comic book materials being promoted, or any other indicators that showed a student or librarian intentionally recommending a comic. The only three pieces of evidence of active promoting I found in examining all twenty of these library web pages for evidence were the following: a photo of a student smiling and holding up a comic book, a list of recommended comic books, and a book club book that was a comic. All three of these schools were secular, and all had high checklist scores. (See Figure #16.)

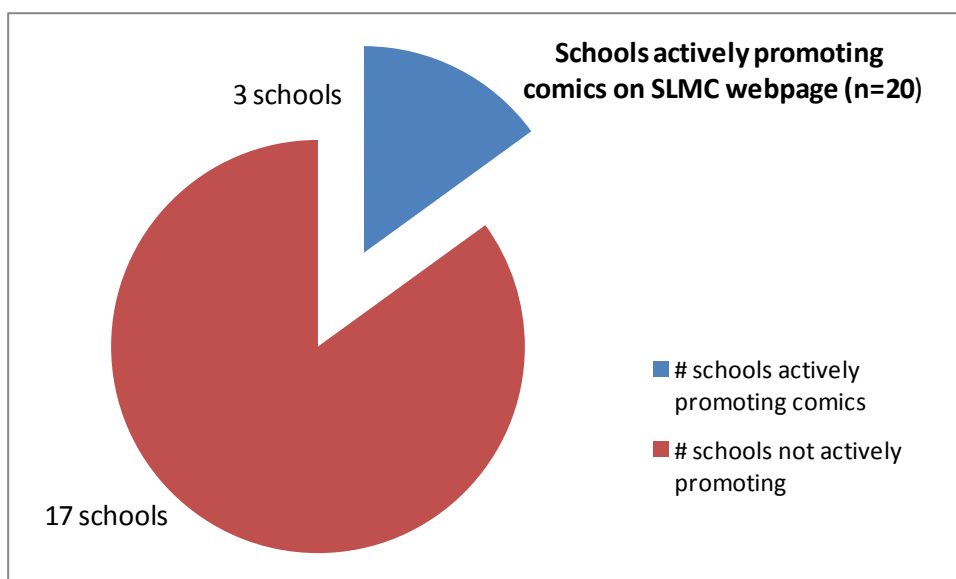


Figure 16: Evidence of active comic book promotion on LMC webpage

If we expand the definition of “promoting” to include the automatic things that Destiny, Follett’s integrated library system, does, then the number goes up to seven schools promoting comic books and graphic novels. That includes Destiny’s automatic displaying of new books or most circulated books, which sometimes happened to include comics the day I checked the website. In comparing the extent to which schools promote reading in general, it is interesting to note that, while many schools seem very excited about reading and recommend many books, they are quiet about comics. It is a subtle message that seems to say that comic books and graphic novels are not part of the library media specialist’s or the Library Media Center’s reading landscape. According to most LMC webpages in this study, they don’t even enter into the conversation about what might be out there to read. (See Figure #17.)

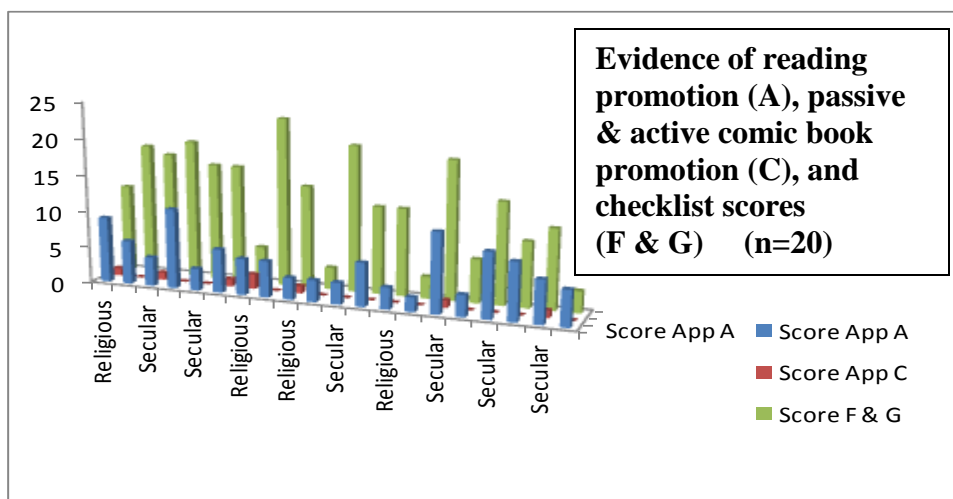


Figure 17: Evidence of reading promotion, comic book promotion, and OPAC checklist scores

Again, there are only three schools actively promoting comic books. Some of the 20 schools scored so highly on the “Reading Promotion” data collection instrument that I had to add in extra points for indicator categories I hadn’t thought of when I made the instrument, but there were very few signs that these librarians’ excited promotion of reading carried over to comic book promotion.

Sample

The Qualtrics web-based survey was distributed via email to 124 people. Two were sent to an email address that belonged not to a person, but to the position of media specialist in the school. (These two addresses did not return completed surveys.) The librarians who received the survey invitation were North Carolina librarians in the NCAIS elementary and private schools, librarians whose email addresses were in the NC SLMA Independent Librarians Network Event list, librarians who were in the North Carolina Battle of the Books email distribution list, and fourteen library workers and librarians in the twelve poorest counties’ schools. Two were Catholic school librarians I knew who were not part of any of these groups.

Sixty-five people answered the survey, a 53% response rate. Of the sixty-five who answered the survey, 25 were from religious schools, and 40 were from secular schools. Forty-seven of those who answered have an MLS degree; 18 do not. Of the librarians who responded to the survey, 47% of the schools represented come from the wealthier counties of Wake, Mecklenberg, Orange and Durham; 9% come from the twelve poorest counties in North Carolina, and 48% come from the other counties in North Carolina. (See Figure #18.)

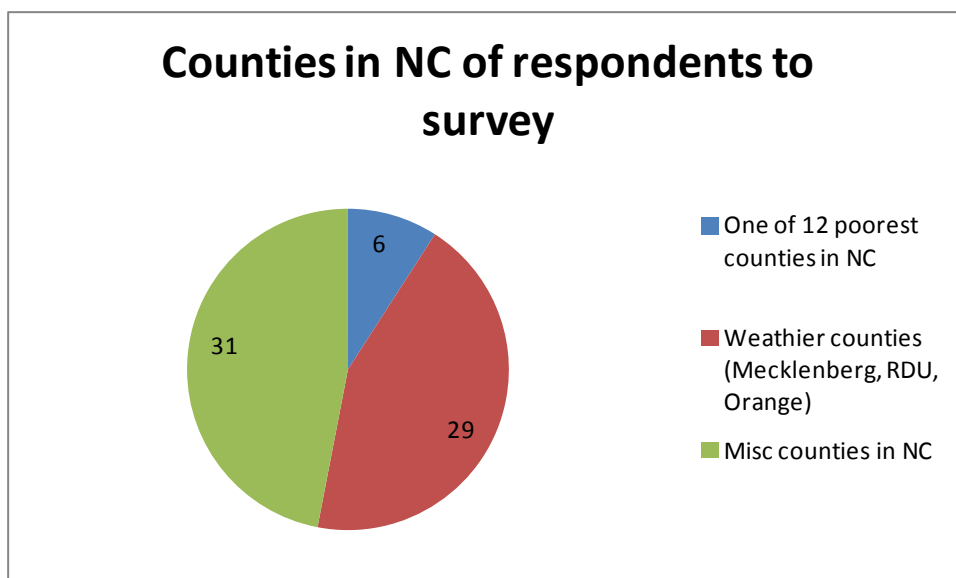


Figure 18: North Carolina survey respondents' counties

Most of the comic book and graphic novel collections in this study were reported in the range of 1-25 titles, but the next most often cited sizes were 26 – 50 and 101- 250. (See Figure #19.)

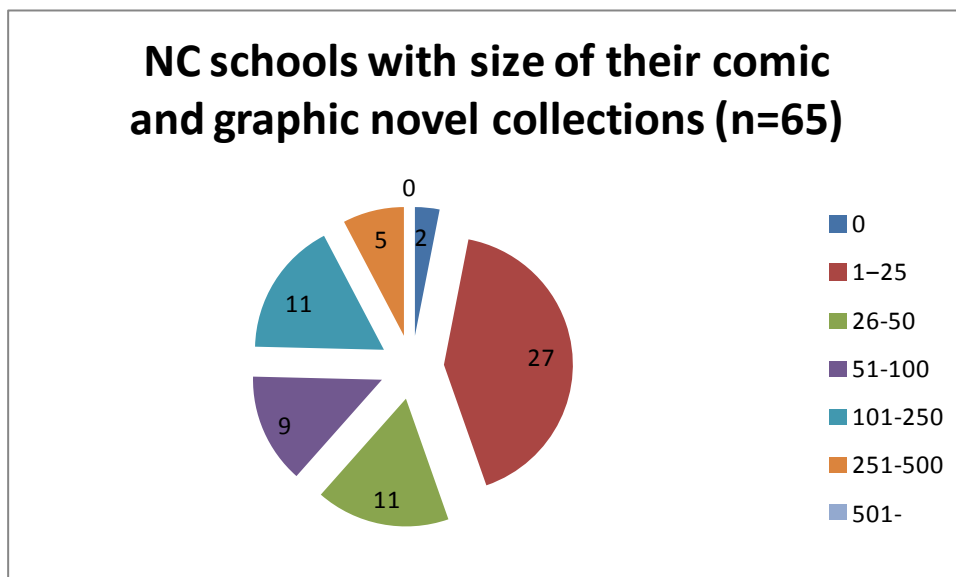


Figure 19: North Carolina private elementary and middle schools' comic book and graphic novel collection sizes

Sampling the Schools from North Carolina's Twelve Poorest Counties

To obtain email addresses, I called 23 of the 62 schools in the twelve poorest counties' sampling frame. Many of these schools did not have a library or a library media specialist. I learned that the smaller schools in these counties tended to have neither, and so I eventually only called the larger schools. Calling the schools in these counties

produced interesting unexpected data about how people in these smaller schools defined a school “library.” Many said that they had no library, but when prompted whether they had a room where books were exchanged, many schools who had first said that they didn’t have a library, then answered yes. Of the 30 schools in the twelve poorest counties for which I could gather this information, I was able to ascertain that 23 of them had some sort of “library.” It was surprising that some of those with a somewhat large student body had no library at all. The other 32 I couldn’t determine due to the limited scope of this project, and lack of school web pages. I didn’t call the schools with the lowest populations due to the fact that the schools without libraries often cited their small size as the reason they did not have a library. Of the 21 most populous schools that have libraries in North Carolina’s 12 poorest counties, most are not staffed full-time by a library professional. (See Figure #20.)

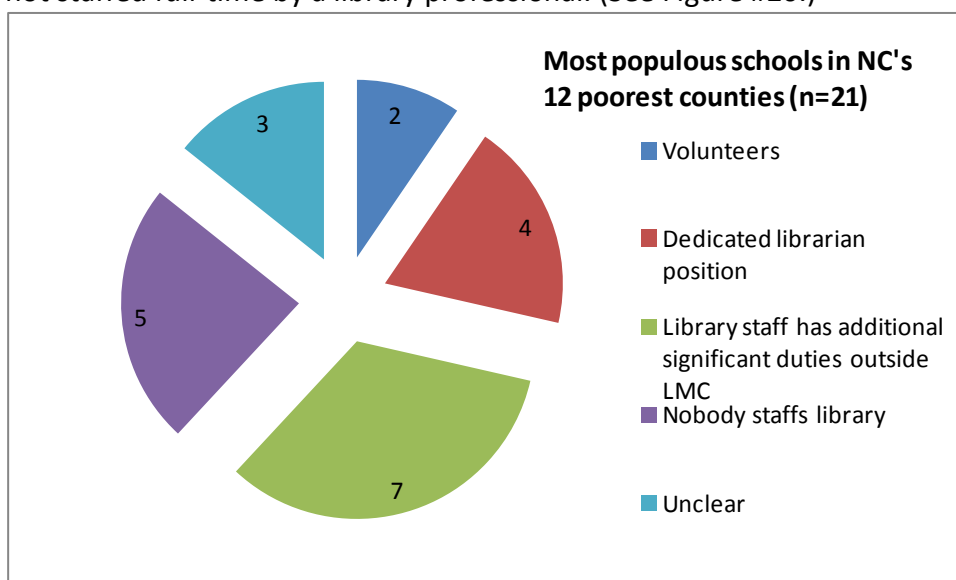


Figure 20: Profile of library workers in North Carolina’s 12 poorest counties’ private elementary and middle school libraries (most populous schools)

The survey was distributed to all of the librarian email addresses I was able to gather from these 12 poorest county schools, which totaled 14 of the most populous schools in these counties. Of the 14, 6 responded: 4 were secular, and 2 were religious. This was a response rate of 43%.

However, the response from these counties was perhaps not representative of these schools in general. Of the 62 private schools in the 12 poorest counties in North Carolina, 44 are religious, 14 are secular, and 4 are undetermined. (See Figure #21.)

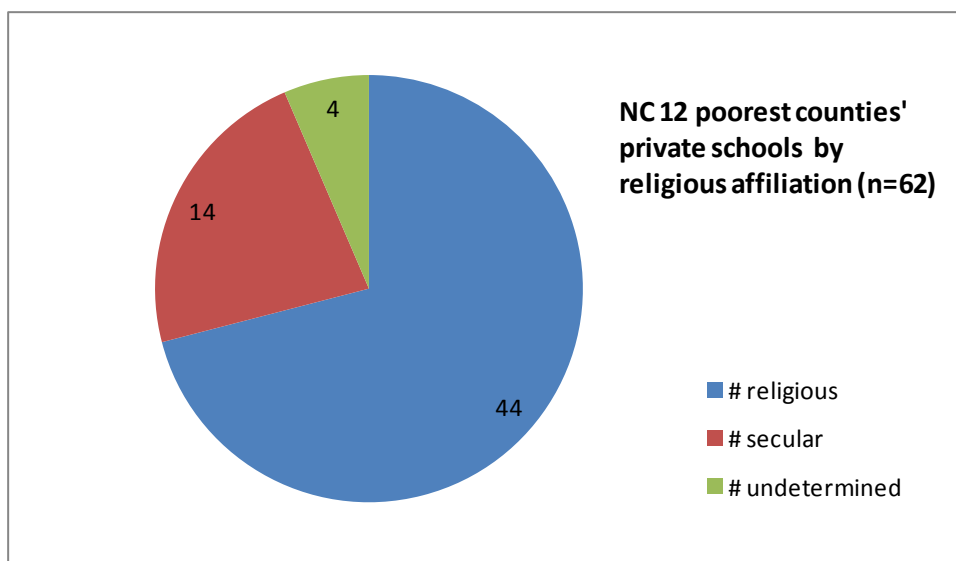


Figure 21: North Carolina's 12 poorest counties' elementary and middle schools by religious affiliation

Also, many of these 62 schools are very small, with several having 20 or fewer students and only a small handful of staff. However, since there is not much data about the comic book and graphic novel collecting of any of these schools, this study's findings are still valuable.

Survey Analysis Results

Some of the survey results were calculated using chi-square calculations to check for correlations with p-values. I used cross-tabulations, percentages, graphs, drill down survey item analysis, and logic to analyze the findings and look for connections.

Of the 65 who responded to the survey, 77% collect comic books and graphic novels. (See Figure #22.)

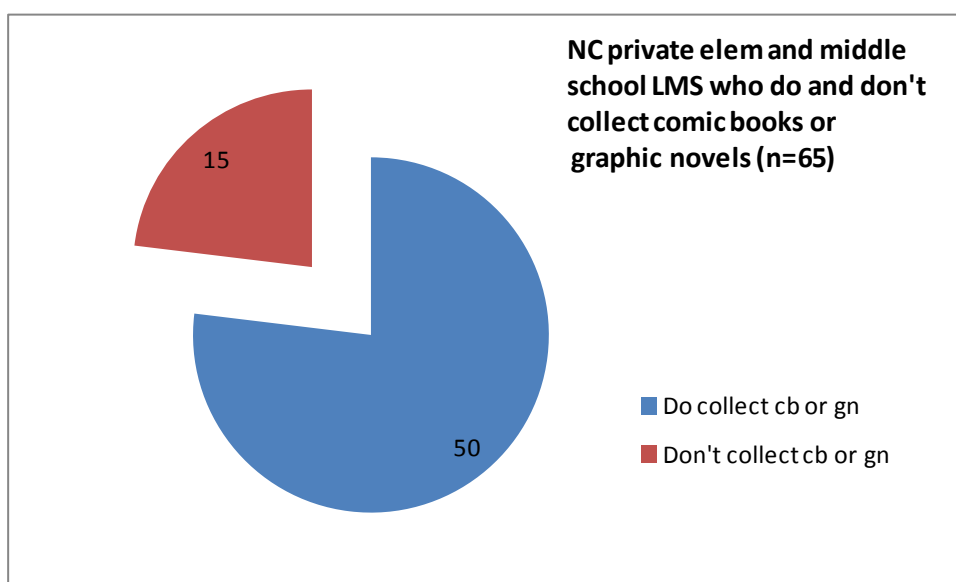


Figure 22: North Carolina private elementary and middle school librarians who collect comic books and graphic novels

School culture: religion and level of wealth of school's county

There was no correlation found between whether a school is religious and whether the library collects comic books or graphic novels, according to p-value calculations.

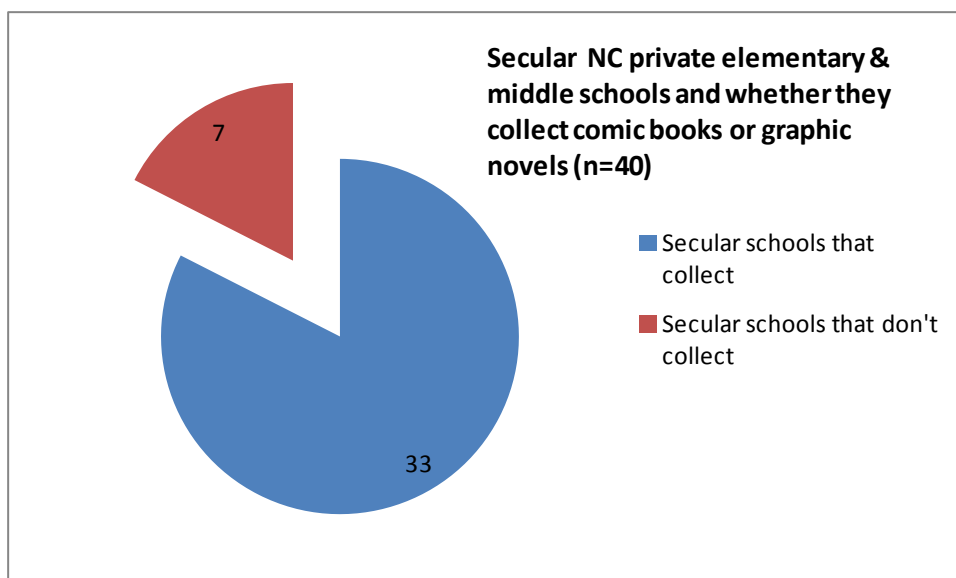


Figure 23: Collection or non-collection of comic books and graphic novels by secular private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina

However, a higher percentage of secular schools in this study do collect comic books and graphic novels, compared to religious schools in this study. (See Figures #23 & #24.)

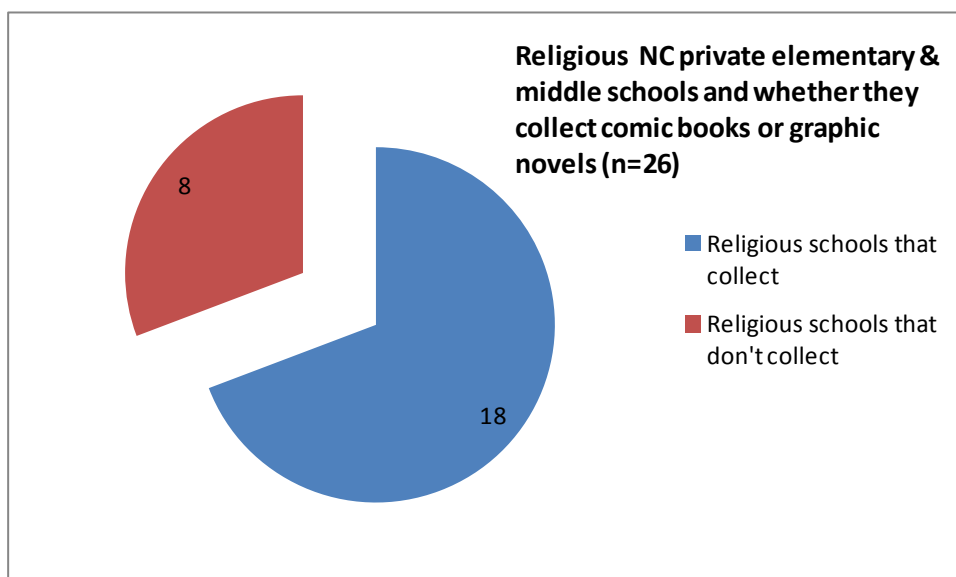


Figure 24: Collection or non-collection of comic books and graphic novels by religious private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina

There is a definite correlation with the size of a school's graphic novel or comic book collection, and whether the school is religious. Religious schools have smaller graphic novel collections. (See Figures #25.)

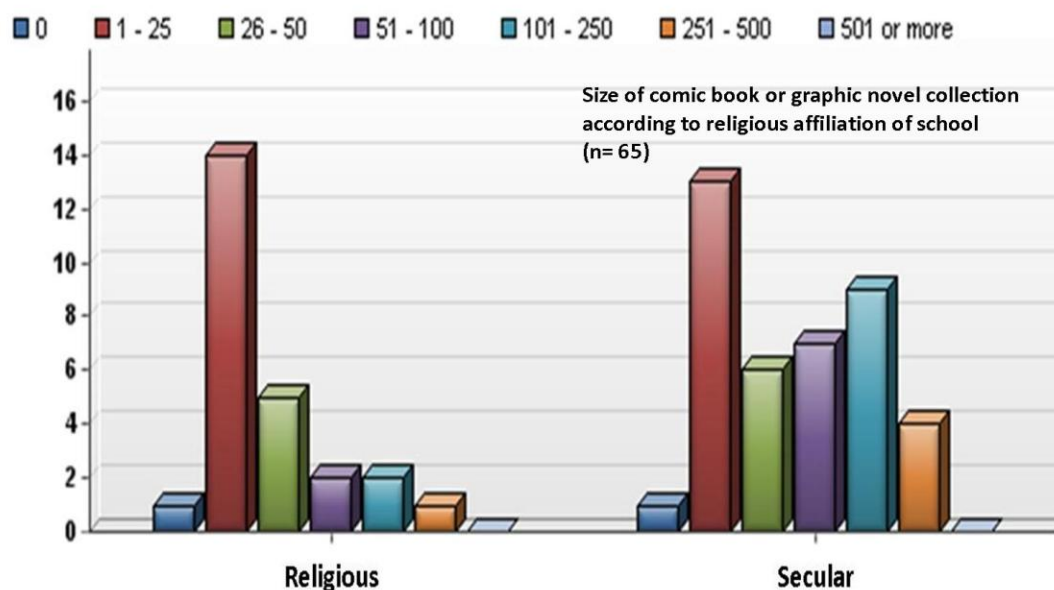


Figure 25: Religious affiliation of private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina compared to size of LMC comic book or graphic novel collection

There was also no correlation found between whether a school collects comic books and graphic novels and the wealth of the school's county. (See Figure #26.)

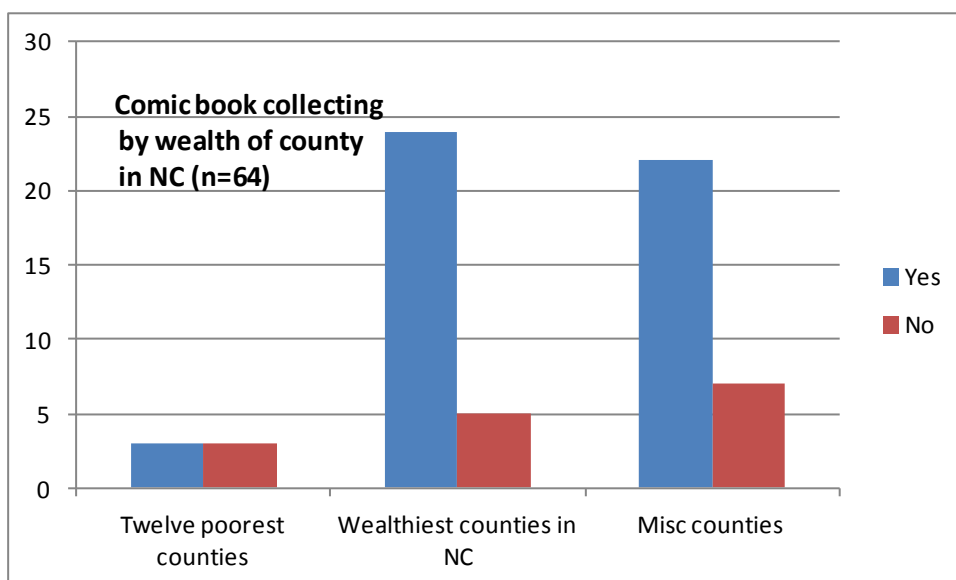


Figure 26: Presence of comic book collecting in North Carolina's private elementary and middle school libraries compared to wealth of schools' counties

Personal reading history of librarian of comic books and graphic novels as a child or teen, and collecting

There was no correlation found between an elementary or middle school librarian's having read comic books as a child or teen and whether or not he or she collects comics.

Also, the size of the graphic novel or comic book collection has no correlation with whether a librarian read them as a child or teen.

By far the most common comic book librarians in this study read as children or teens was *Archie*, which 23% of all respondents had read when young. Other titles several had read as children included *Mad* magazine, *Peanuts*, *Richie Rich*, *Superman*, and *Donald Duck*. (See Figure #27.)

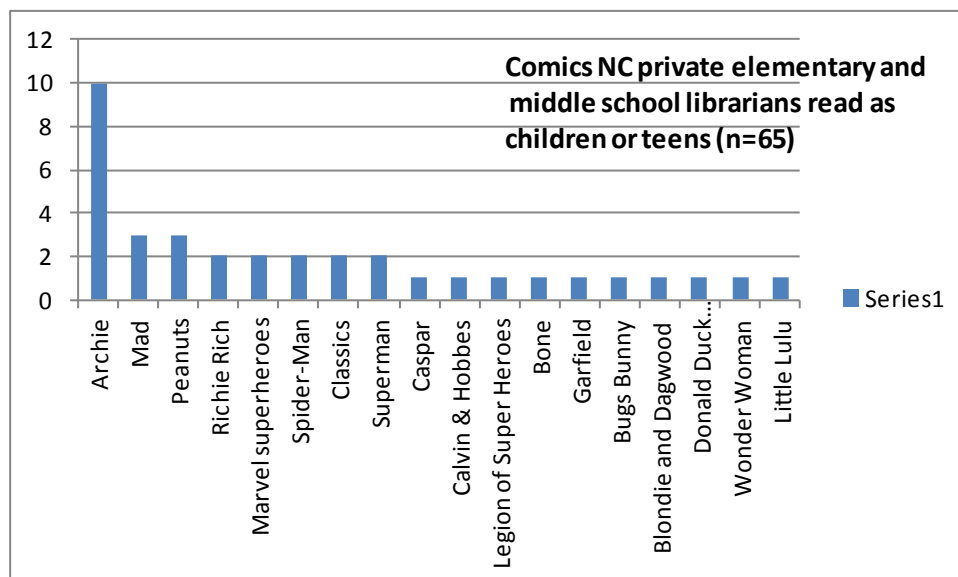


Figure 27: Comic book titles North Carolina private elementary and middle school librarians read as children or teens

There was a very strong correlation found according to the p-value between working at a religious school and not having read them as a child or teen. In the secular schools, whether the librarians had read them as a child or a teen was split; in the religious schools, it was very unlikely that someone working in a religious school had. (See Figure 28.)

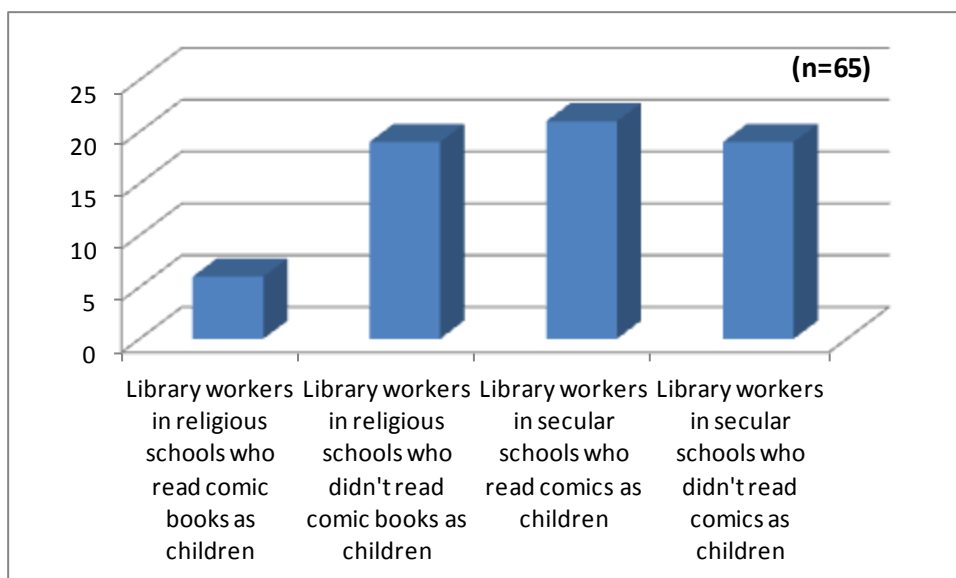


Figure 28: Drill down with religious profile of school and whether respondents' history of reading comic books as a child or teen

This was interesting, because if other teachers and administrators in a religious school were raised also in a religious environment that didn't encourage or approve of comic book reading, then the librarian collecting comic books and graphic novels in a religious school might be encountering resistance in going against the teachers, administrators, and parents' growing up experiences.

Correlations with Collecting Graphic Novels and Comic Books and Librarians' Technological Capabilities and Attitudes

Interestingly, there were several correlations with librarians' technology behaviors and capabilities and the collecting comic books or graphic novels. There was the strongest possible p-value correlation ($p=0.00$) for whether a librarian had a library website and whether he or she collected comics. This study indicates that if a private elementary and middle school librarian collects comics, it is extremely likely that he or she also has a library website. (See Figure #29.)

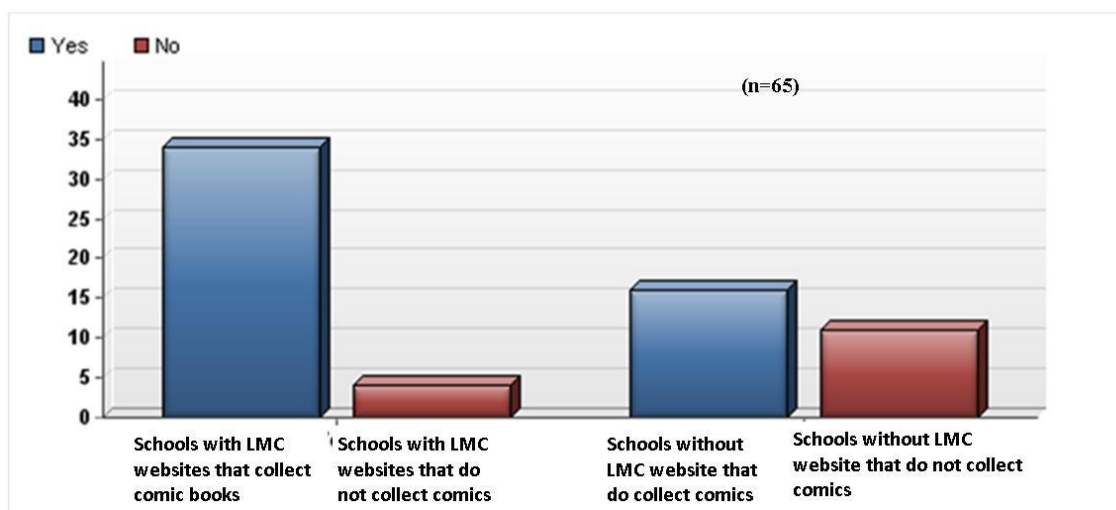


Figure 29: Presence of a school library website and the collecting of comic books or graphic novels

There is also a very strong correlation that librarians who do not let the students contribute to the school website using various Web 2.0 tools, also do not collect comic books or graphic novels. (See Figure #30.)

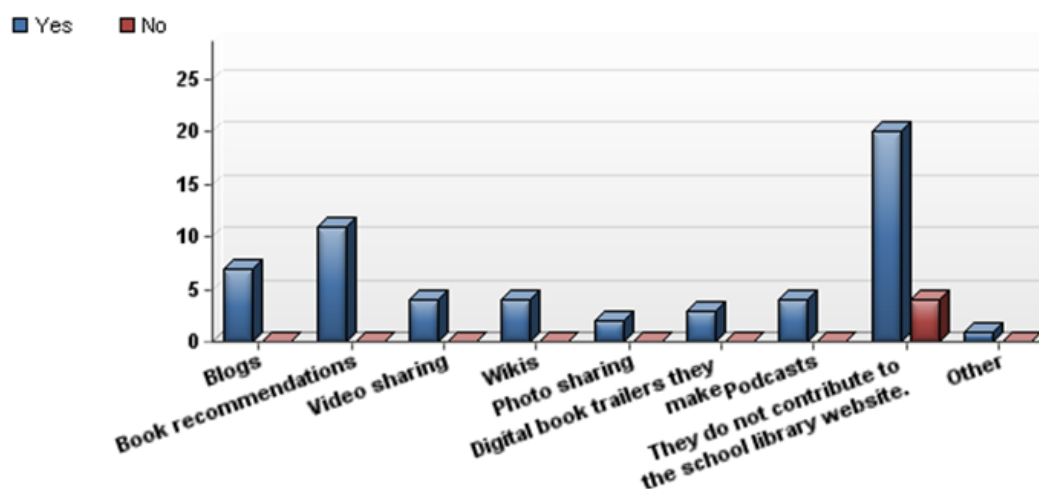


Figure 30: The collecting of comic books or graphic novels and ways in which the students contribute to the LMC website

There was a very strong relationship, determined by p-value cross-tabulation, with those librarians who train teachers in technology and the curriculum, and who also collect comic books and graphic novels. (See Figure #31.)

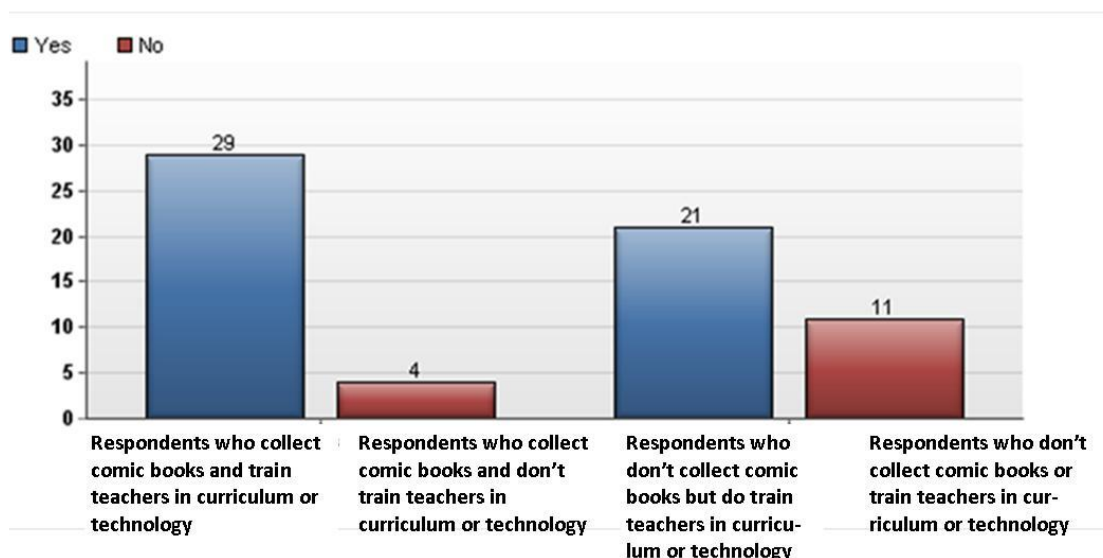


Figure 31: Elementary and middle school librarians at private schools in North Carolina who train teachers in technology or curriculum

Librarians who collect comic book and graphic novels were much also more likely to describe themselves as one of the technology leaders in the school compared to those who don't collect comic books and graphic novels. (42% of those who collect comics described themselves this way in contrast to 27% of the non-collectors who described themselves thus). Librarians in this study who collected comic book and graphic novels were much more likely to say they could make websites and to have used or created a wiki. They are also much less likely to say that they are not very comfortable with technology. (See Figure #32.)

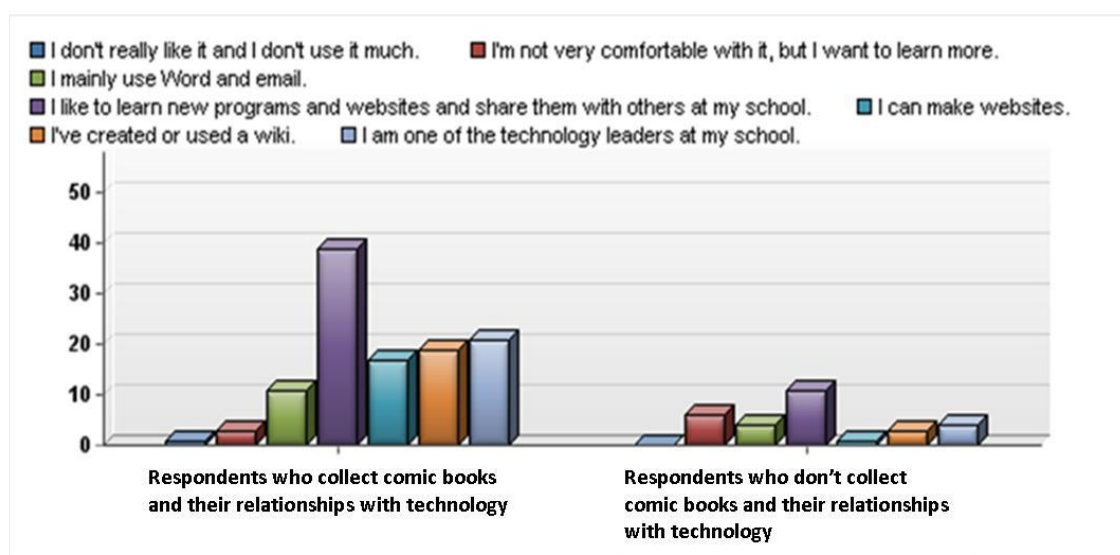


Figure 32: Respondents' relationship with technology correlated with the collecting of comic books and graphic novels

Reviewing these findings reminds one of Joyce Valenza's article, "Manifesto for 21st Century School Librarians." Librarians with an MLS were also much more likely to describe themselves as technology leaders.

Librarians with MLS degrees and comic book or graphic novel collecting

There was a correlation between whether a librarian has an MLS, and whether he or she collects comic books or graphic novels. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents who collect comics also have an MLS. For those who didn't collect, however, there is no correlation with having the MLS or not. (See Figure #33.)

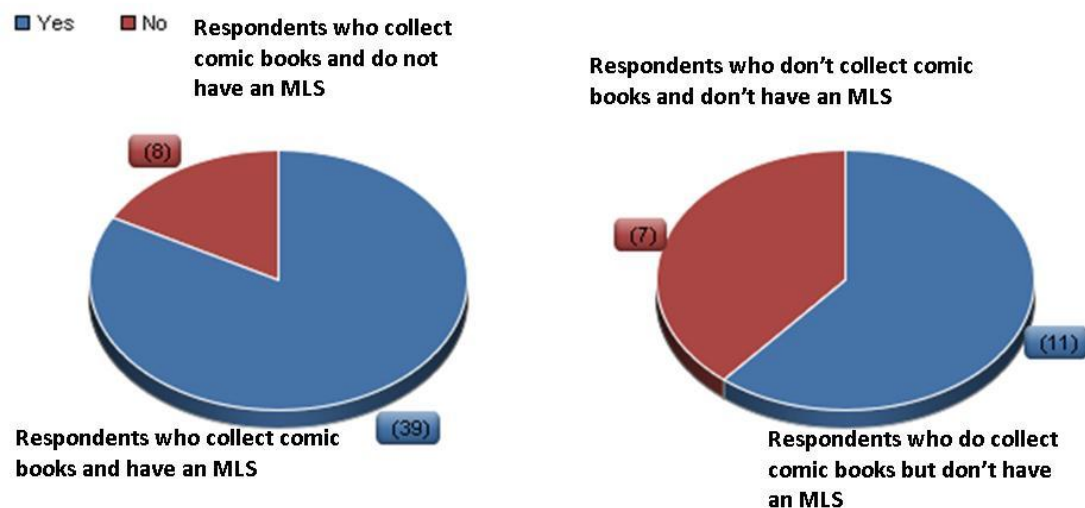


Figure 33: Private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina with an MLS compared to the prevalence of collecting comic books and graphic novels

Library workers with an MLS also have larger comic book and graphic novel collections. (See Figure #34.)

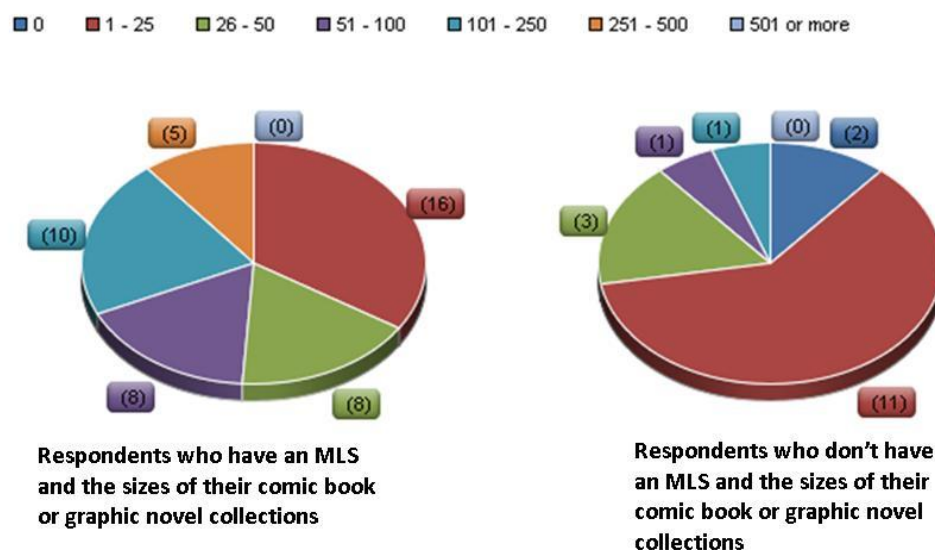


Figure 34: The size of the comic book and graphic novel collections of private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina, compared to whether they hold an MLS degree

Library workers with an MLS also use more tools to select graphic novels and comic books, and more often use conferences and professional workshops to help select comic books and graphic novels. Library workers with an MLS degree also use published comic book criteria, attend webinars, and go to comic book stores to build their comic book and graphic novel collections, while comic-collecting library workers without an MLS do not use these tools. Library workers with or without an MLS answered in similar percentages that they use book reviews, student input, list serves, Amazon reviews, and reading or perusing the comic book as selection tools. Library workers with an MLS tend to rely less on catalogs and tend to use on-line vendors more than non-MLS library workers. (See Figure #35.)

#	Answer	Yes	No
1	Book reviews	92.31%	100.00%
2	Journal articles	58.97%	30.00%
3	Published comic book evaluation criteria	10.26%	0.00%
4	Student input	74.36%	80.00%
5	Listserve	12.82%	10.00%
6	Conferences or other professional workshops	48.72%	10.00%
7	Catalogs	30.77%	40.00%
8	Other librarians' recommendations	69.23%	50.00%
9	Webinars	5.13%	0.00%
10	Amazon reviews	28.21%	30.00%
11	Comic book stores	12.82%	0.00%
12	Books with graphic novel recommended lists	30.77%	30.00%
13	Online title selection with vendors such as Baker and Taylor or Follett	35.90%	20.00%
14	Reading or perusing a copy of the comic book or graphic novel	69.23%	60.00%
15	Other	7.69%	0.00%
	Total	229	46

Figure 35: Percentages of prevalence of various tools used to select comic books and graphic novels among private school library workers with and without an MLS degree

Characteristics of Comic Book and Graphic Novel Titles Collected

Librarians with an MLS in this study say that they collect more non-fiction about science, more manga, and more wordless books. Compared to library workers without an MLS, fewer of them collect religious comic books, comic movie / TV tie-ins, and comic strip collections. Religious schools in this study collect more religious titles than their secular counterparts, but fewer of everything else (as measured by percentage). There seems to be less variety in what they choose. (See Figure #36.)

#	Answer	Types collected by those with MLS	Types collected by those without MLS
1	Super heroes such as Batman or Ironman	41.03%	45.45%
2	Comic strip collections such as Peanuts or Garfield	51.28%	72.73%
3	Manga such as Yotsuba!	35.90%	9.09%
4	Wordless comic books or wordless graphic novels such as Owly	43.59%	9.09%
5	Movie or TV tie-ins, such as Indiana Jones or SpongeBob	17.95%	27.27%
6	Graphic novels of popular fiction books, such as Stormbreaker or Maximum Ride	51.28%	36.36%
7	Other fiction comic books or graphic novels	79.49%	72.73%
8	Graphic novel biographies	48.72%	54.55%
9	Graphic novel religious or Bible stories	7.69%	18.18%
10	Graphic novel mythology	46.15%	36.36%
11	Graphic novel non-fiction about historical events	61.54%	63.64%
12	Graphic novel non-fiction about science	43.59%	18.18%
13	Other non-fiction graphic novel titles	17.95%	9.09%
	Total	213	52

Figure 36: Types of comic books and graphic novels selected by library workers with and without an MLS degree



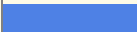



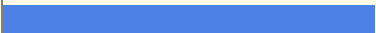





Secular school libraries collect a wider variety of everything in comparison with their religious counterparts, except that they do not collect Bible stories, and they scored slightly lower in collecting non-fiction about historical events. The types the religious

libraries collect in significant numbers (47% or higher) are comic strip collections, biographies, and “other fiction comic books or graphic novels,” and historical non-fiction. (See Figure #37.)

#	Answer	Religious schools	Secular schools
1	Super heroes such as Batman or Ironman	35.29%	45.45%
2	Comic strip collections such as Peanuts or Garfield	47.06%	60.61%
3	Manga such as Yotsuba!	23.53%	33.33%
4	Wordless comic books or wordless graphic novels such as Owly	29.41%	39.39%
5	Movie or TV tie-ins, such as Indiana Jones or SpongeBob	17.65%	21.21%
6	Graphic novels of popular fiction books, such as Stormbreaker or Maximum Ride	35.29%	54.55%
7	Other fiction comic books or graphic novels	64.71%	84.85%
8	Graphic novel biographies	47.06%	51.52%
9	Graphic novel religious or Bible stories	29.41%	0.00%
10	Graphic novel mythology	23.53%	54.55%
11	Graphic novel non-fiction about historical events	64.71%	60.61%
12	Graphic novel non-fiction about science	29.41%	42.42%
13	Other non-fiction graphic novel titles	11.76%	18.18%
	Total	78	187

Figure 37: Types of comic books and graphic novels collected according to religious affiliation of private elementary and middle school libraries in North Carolina

The most popular types collected overall (with 40% or more of the respondents collecting them) were superheroes, comic strip collections, graphic novels of popular fiction books, other fiction comic books, biographies, mythology, non-fiction about historical events. (See Figure #38.)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Super heroes such as Batman or Ironman		21	42%
	Comic strip collections such as Peanuts or Garfield		28	56%
Q3	Manga such as Yotsuba!		15	30%
4	Wordless comic books or wordless graphic novels such as Owly		18	36%
5	Movie or TV tie-ins, such as Indiana Jones or SpongeBob		10	20%
6	Graphic novels of popular fiction books, such as Stormbreaker or Maximum Ride		24	48%
7	Other fiction comic books or graphic novels		39	78%
8	Graphic novel biographies		25	50%
9	Graphic novel religious or Bible stories		5	10%
10	Graphic novel mythology		22	44%
11	Graphic novel non-fiction about historical events		31	62%
12	Graphic novel non-fiction about science		19	38%


13	Other non-fiction graphic novel titles		8	16%
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Figure 38: Percentages of types of comic books and graphic novels collected overall by private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina

In response to the question, “Is there a certain type of comic book or graphic novel you don’t collect?” respondents provided various answers, with the most common objections being to titles that are too violent or too mature or that have adult content or bad language. (See Figure #39.)

"Types" cb or gn not collected	# responses
Linked to TV or video game	1
Religious	1
Pop culture	1
Adult content	6
Violent	8
Bad language	4
Sexually explicit	2
Superheroes	3
YA or rated OT or Mature	2
Not highly rated or well-reviewed	2
Don't meet selection criteria	1
"Comic books"	1
Manga	1
Manga for older readers	1
Scantily clad characters	1
Spider-Man	1
Militaristic	1
Too mature	4
Vulgar themes	1
Not pre-bound	1
"most"	1
"inappropriate content"	1

Figure 39: “Types” of comic books or graphic novels elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina avoid collecting

Motivation for Collecting or Not Collecting: Factors that Influence Comic Book and Graphic Novel Collecting

When the library workers who did not collect comic books and graphic novels were asked why they don’t, surprisingly no one answered that it was because of complaints

or challenges they had received. (See Figure #40.) There were differences in the responses according to whether the school was religious or not. Workers in religious schools were more likely to say they didn't collect due to their perceptions that the parents and administration would not want them.

#	Answer	Yes	No
1	They are too violent.	25.00%	0.00%
2	They are too sexual	25.00%	0.00%
3	I don't know what to collect.	25.00%	28.57%
4	I think the parents would not want them.	37.50%	14.29%
5	I think the teachers would not want them.	12.50%	14.29%
6	I think the administration would not want them.	25.00%	14.29%
7	I don't like them.	25.00%	14.29%
8	I think they're too easy to read.	12.50%	14.29%
9	I've received complaints or challenges about them.	0.00%	0.00%
10	I don't like the way women are depicted in them.	25.00%	14.29%
11	Other	37.50%	71.43%
	Total	20	13

Figure 40: Reasons why elementary and middle school librarians do not collect comic books or graphic novels categorically, according to religious affiliation of schools

They are also more likely to not collect comic books and graphic novels due to classic stereotypes about comic books, such as that they are too violent and too sexual, which none of the librarians at secular schools listed as reasons to not collect comic books or graphic novels categorically. Workers in religious schools also were more likely to not collect comic books due to objections about the way women were portrayed in them, and also because they personally didn't like them.

Seventy-one percent of respondents working at secular schools also chose "other" as a reason for not collecting them, while 38% of those in religious schools chose "other." Since a few noted in the open text response that they felt comic books were not worthy

of budget dollars, it is probable that some would have chosen this response. A small percentage (only 13%) do not collect because they think they are too easy to read, which represents a shift from librarians' attitudes earlier in the twentieth century, when this was a reason many didn't collect comic books. Only one listed concerns about the ephemeral nature of comics' often poorly glued or flimsy format, another shift away from earlier librarians' attitudes, when this was often cited as a reason to not collect them.

When given the opportunity to respond to the open response text question, "How do you feel about comic books or graphic novels?", the most frequently given response of those who did not collect them was that they were not worthy of the budget. (See Figure #41.)

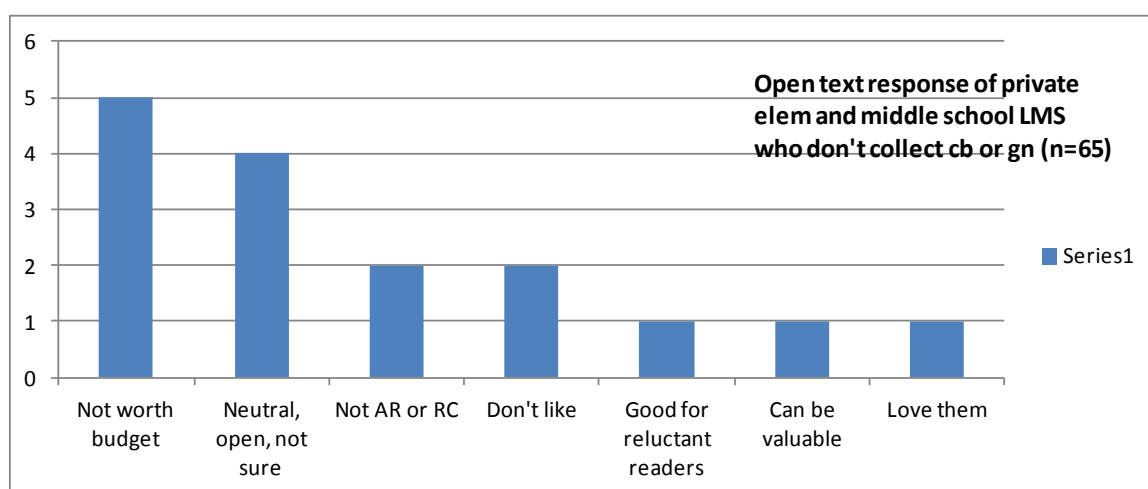


Figure 41: Open text responses of attitudes regarding comic books and graphic novels of elementary and middle school librarians who don't collect them

It is interesting that one said that his or her school had wealthy parents who could afford comics if they wanted them, and therefore the librarian didn't want to spend the school's money on comic books. Others who cited this reason said that their budgets were limited and they had to prioritize other titles that were considered more important.

Other attitudes expressed by those who do not collect comic books or graphic novels were that they were neutral or open or not sure about comic books, while others said that they did not like them or did not collect them because Reading Counts and Accelerated Reader books were not comic books. (This is inaccurate because several comic books and graphic novels are in fact in the Accelerated Reader program.)

When asked "What motivates you to collect comic books or graphic novels in your school library?", the most frequently cited reasons were student requests, reading the research that indicates using graphic novels builds literacy, the librarian's personal

enjoyment of them, and hoping it will like to non-comic book reading. Respondents at both religious and secular schools chose these reasons in almost equal percentages. Librarians working at religious schools, however, less frequently cited journal articles, reading them for pleasure, or attending workshops or conference presentations as some of their motivators. (See Figure #42.)

#	Answer	Religious library workers' motivations for collection comic books or graphic novels	Secular library workers' motivations for collection comic books or graphic novels
1	I like them.	37.50%	33.33%
2	I read them for pleasure.	6.25%	24.24%
3	The students request them.	68.75%	72.73%
4	I read the research that indicates using graphic novels builds literacy.	62.50%	63.64%
5	The library literature has convinced me to do so.	25.00%	27.27%
6	Other librarians have recommended them.	25.00%	36.36%
7	I hope it will lead to more non-comic book reading.	56.25%	54.55%
8	Journal article.	6.25%	15.15%
9	Workshop or conference presentation.	18.75%	27.27%
10	Other	6.25%	18.18%
	Total	50	123

Figure 42: Factors motivating private elementary and middle school librarians to collect comic books and graphic novels, according to religious profile of school

When given the opportunity to respond to the open text question, “How do you feel about comic books or graphic novels?”, the most frequently given responses of those who collected said that they liked them, appreciated that they encouraged reluctant readers or were a stepping stone to other reading, or acknowledged that the children like them. Many of them said that they didn’t personally like them, or that they were

indifferent. Four used the word “fun” to describe them. A few noted that they found them hard to read, which confirms research that comic books require a different kind of literacy than traditional all-text books. (See Figure #43.)

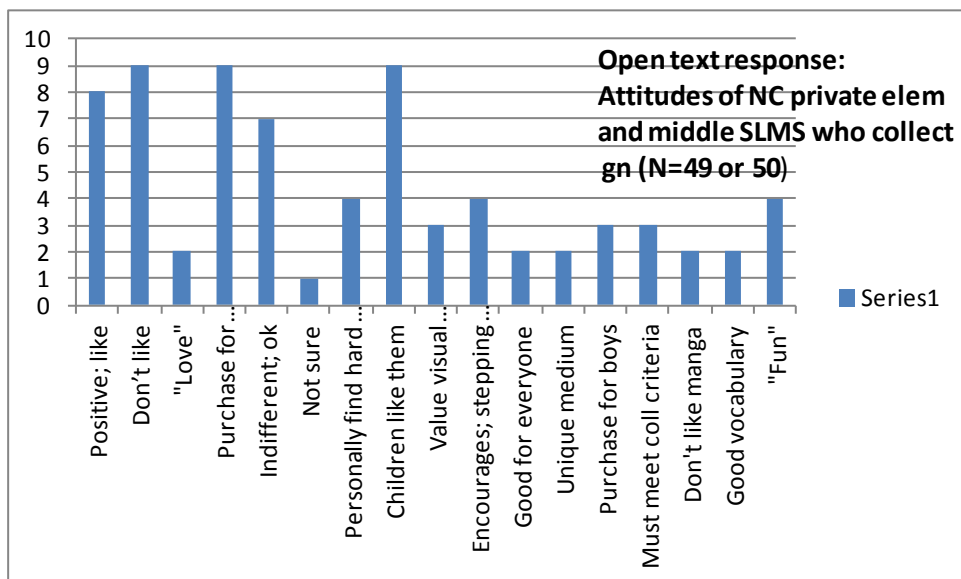


Figure 43: Open text responses of attitudes regarding comic books and graphic novels of elementary and middle school librarians who collect them

The motivations of the librarian to collect comic books and graphic novels also affect the size of the comic book or graphic novel collection. One hundred percent of the librarians who have very large collections (251 – 500) said that they like comic books and graphic novels, and that they read them for pleasure. This is in contrast to the motivator “Other librarians have recommended them,” which was most often cited by respondents whose comic book and graphic novel collection size was in the 1-25 titles range. A personal passion for comic books and graphic novels as evidenced by the motivators “I like them” and “I read them for pleasure,” correlates with librarians in this study who have larger collections. In contrast, the librarians who feel it is their duty to collect them – since another librarian told them to, or since they read about it in a professional journal or workshop – have a weaker correlation with having a large comic book collection. (See Figure #44.)

#	Answer	0	1 - 25	26 - 50	51 - 100	101 - 250	251 - 500	501 or more
1	I like them.	0	3	1	5	4	4	0
2	I read them for pleasure.	0	0	0	3	1	4	0
3	The students request them.	0	1	1	3	4	4	0
4	I read the research that indicates using graphic novels builds literacy.	0	3	0	4	4	3	0
5	The library literature has convinced me to do so.	0	2	0	2	0	1	0
6	Other librarians have recommended them.	0	2	0	1	0	1	0
7	I hope it will lead to more non-comic book reading.	0	2	1	3	3	2	0
8	Journal article.	0	0		1	1	0	0
9	Workshop or conference presentation.	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
10	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	14	3	23	18	20	0

Figure 44: Size of comic book or graphic novel collection correlated with reasons elementary and middle school librarians collect them

It is very interesting that there was no correlation found with the answers “I like them” and “I read them for pleasure” and responses to the question, “Did you read comic books as a child or teen?” These librarians who like them might have come to like them as adult librarians. Perhaps they were inspired by the students’ enjoyment of them... a true collaboration.

Other Professional Behaviors and the Collecting of Comic Books or Graphic Novels

There was no correlation between the question, “Are the AASL standards for the twenty-first century learner incorporated into your library curriculum?” and whether or not a librarian collected comic books and graphic novels. Of those who responded to the survey, 25% did not know whether they were incorporating the national library curriculum standards or not, and this had no correlation with their comic book or graphic novel collecting.

However, there was a correlation between the types of professional reading, and how much of it the respondents were doing, and whether they collected comic books or not. Almost all of those who collect comic books and graphic novels read a library-related journal such as *School Library Journal* (96%). (See Figure #45.)

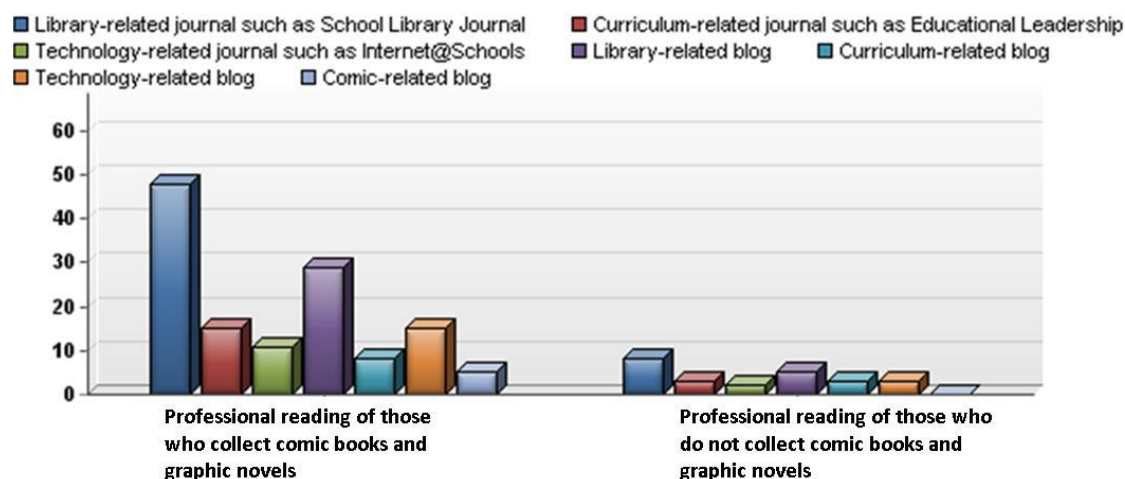


Figure 45: Collecting of comic books and types and prevalence of professional reading

The relationship between collecting comic books and technology was confirmed again here, as a higher percentage of those who collect comic books and graphic novels read a technology-related blog or a technology-related journal compared to a lower percentage of those who didn't collect. In general, a higher percentage of those collect comic books and graphic novels reported doing more professional reading, and in more varied categories, than their counterparts who did not collect.

Conclusions

Most of the schools in this study are collecting comic books and graphic novels. This study found that some religious and secular private elementary and middle school libraries in North Carolina are collecting recommended core comic book and graphic novel titles. This study also found that while some religious schools and secular schools are collecting core titles in “high” numbers, the rate at which North Carolina’s religious private elementary and middle schools collect comic books and graphic novels varies. This study suggests that there is a positive correlation between a private elementary and middle school’s larger size graphic novel collections and the librarian’s liking them and reading them for pleasure, the librarian’s having an MLS, and the secular nature of the school. This study also suggests that while many core titles are being collected in private elementary and middle school libraries in North Carolina, they tend to be well-known series. Fewer “off the beaten path” titles that appear on lists and are popular, award-winning, or critically acclaimed seem to be collected if they are mainly available through alternate means such as comic book stores, online vendors such as Amazon.com, and conference publishers’ exhibits. The OPAC study also tentatively suggests that private elementary and middle schools are not collecting manga very much, even adaptations and spin-offs of popular, heavily collected fiction series such as *Maximum Ride* and *Warriors*. This tentative finding would seem to dovetail with Masuchika’s conclusions that American academic libraries are not collecting manga at the same rate as they are Western comic books and graphic novels. There was a correlation found with librarians with an MLS and a higher rate of manga collecting. However, the conclusions suggested by the OPAC study would need to be investigated with a larger sample of titles and subjects to verify it, since there were only six manga titles investigated at twenty schools.

The OPAC sample was perhaps not representative of typical North Carolina private elementary and middle schools libraries’ comic books and graphic novels holdings: almost all of the 20 schools’ librarians in the OPAC study had an MLS and were active enough to have a library website and an OPAC, and, according to my survey results, private elementary and middle school librarians in North Carolina are more likely to have larger graphic novel collections, more likely to collect comic book and graphic novels using varied tools, and more likely to collect more varied types and genres of graphic novels. However, while these OPAC results are possibly not so representative of the whole state, they might also possibly represent some of the more vigorous collecting of comic book and graphic novels in private elementary and middle schools in North Carolina now.

Librarians' attitudes towards comic books and graphic novels were complex. One librarian replied that "I have had long discussions with myself about graphic novels." Private elementary and middle school librarians in this study tend to avoid them if they perceive them as being too violent, too sexual, too adult, too unworthy of budget dollars, too "vulgar," or too negative towards women, but librarians who don't collect them do not report complaints or challenges as a desisting factor. Collecting graphic novels and comic books is affected by a librarian's perception of and personal relationship with them. Some "love" them; some think they're "fun;" one librarian described them as "new and different and ... kind of like fresh air." Some, like their predecessors in school libraries in decades previously, refuse to collect "most" or all. However, most of the librarians in this study collect them anyway because the children like them, request them, and keep reading them. As one said, "I don't care for them but I do read Manga because I have a Anime/Manga club for students." This ambivalent attitude was echoed in the school library websites, where there was much evidence of reading promotion, but scant evidence of comic book promotion.

Librarians in this study who collect comic books and graphic novels were found to be more likely to read professional literature of various types and to use more varied professional tools for selecting them. There was a noticeable positive correlation between collecting comic books and graphic novels and using technology, reading technology-related professional matter, having a school website, allowing the students to contribute to that school website, training the teachers in technology or curriculum, and reporting oneself as a leader of technology in the school. Private elementary and middle school librarians with an MLS degree in North Carolina who collect comic books and graphic novels have richer and larger comic book and graphic novel collections, and used more varied tools to build them.

For Further Study

Further study could be done to analyze more data from North Carolina's twelve poorest counties. Data about library services these schools offer, characteristics of these schools' library workers, holdings and size of these schools' collections, whether the correlations found in this study with technology and comic book and graphic novel collecting could be replicated, and whether professional library curriculum standards are being applied would all be valuable. The six schools from the twelve poorest counties that responded to this survey are not representative of these counties' schools, and a deeper study of the collections could be very informative. An investigator exploring these schools' collections would need to do so through site visits, since only one school in this study has an OPAC at this point.

Another study could be done on comic book and graphic novel collecting in special libraries, such as those serving students in alternative schools, which was beyond the scope of this project.

Finally, a more in-depth study could be executed by distributing a survey about comic book collections and the factors influencing or correlate with that collecting to all the middle school and elementary school library media specialists in North Carolina. Those responses could then be cross-tabulated according to whether the schools are public or private. The responses could also be compared across various regions of the state.

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Appendix A*

Evidence of Reading Promotion on Library Webpage

Name of school _____

Grade levels in school _____

Religious? Y / N

County _____

Evidence of reading promotion on school library website

Feature	Yes/No	Comment
Recommended book lists		
Links to other libraries		
Readers' advisory tools		
Reading-related videos		
Digital book trailers		
Reading-related podcasts or wikis		
Book blogs		
Reading event promotion		
New materials		

Based on Appendix C in Jane McMahon's UNC Master's Paper, *Evidence of Virtual Learning Commons in Independent School Library Webpages*.

*To be used in conjunction with OPAC analysis.

Appendix B*

Evidence of Web 2.0 Tools on School Library Webpages

Name of school _____

Grade levels in school _____

Religious? Y / N

County _____

Feature	Yes/No	Comment
Student wikis		
Student blogs		
Social networking for students		
Digital storytelling		
Digital organizing tools (e.g. iCyte, Delicious, online mind maps)		

*To be used in conjunction with OPAC analysis.

Appendix C*

Evidence of Comic Book Promotion on Library Website

Name of school _____

Grade levels in school _____

Religious? Y / N

County _____

Feature	Yes/no	Comment
Librarian or student blog posting about comics		
Research on library webpage about comics		
Links to comic blog or website		
Link to comic book store		
Recommended comic list		
New comic book materials promoted		

*To be used in conjunction with OPAC checklist.

Appendix D

Comic Books and Graphic Novels Recommended by Survey Respondents for Private Elementary and Middle Schools

Title	# of respondents who recommended title
Alex Rider series	2
American Born Chinese	1
Amulet	4
Annotated Northwest Passage	1
Anya's ghost	2
Apollo Mission	1
Arrival (Shaun Tan)	3
Artemis Fowl	2
Asterix	1
Babymouse	13
Bad Island	3
Bad Kitty	1
Batman	1
Benny and Penny	1
Bible stories	1
Binky the space cat	1
Biographies	1
Bleach (manga)	2
Bone	20
Boxcar Children	1
Brain Camp	1
Calvin and Hobbes	5
Chiggers	1
Classics	3
Coraline	1
Daniel Boom: Loud Boy	1
Dragonbreath	2
Family secret (by Eric Heuvel)	1
Far Side	1
Flight	1
Frankenstein	1
Fruits Basket	1
Fullmetal Alchemist (manga)	2
Garfield	6
Geronimo Stilton	1

Title	# of respondents who recommended title
Gettysburg: The graphic novel	1
Ghostopolis	2
Graphic Heroes of the Amer. Rev.	1
Graphic Library (Capstone Press)	1
Graphic mythology	3
Great Expectations	1
Hardy Boys Papercutz	1
Hounds of Baskerville	1
Into the volcano	1
Invention of Hugo Cabret	1
Isabel Soto	1
Jane Eyre	1
King Arthur and Knights of round table	1
Laika	1
Level up	1
Little Prince	1
Lunch Lady	5
Macbeth	1
Magic Pickle	1
Maus I	4
Maus II	2
Max Axiom	1
Maximum Ride	1
Movie tie-ins	1
Nancy Drew Papercutz	4
Naruto manga	2
Odyssey (author Hinds)	1
Olympians	1
On the case with Holmes and Watson	1
Owly	6
Peanuts	3
Persepolis	2
Pinky and Stinky	1
Rabbi Harvey	1
Rapunzel's revenge	4
Regifters	1
Robot Dreams	2
Scooby-Doo	1
The Search (by Eric Heuvel)	2
Secret Science Alliance	1
Shonen Jump	1
SilverFin (Young James Bond)	1

Title	# of respondents who recommended title
Smile	1
Spider-Man	1
SpongeBob	1
Sports Illus. Kids graphic novels	1
Squish	2
Star Wars	2
Still I Rise: a graphic novel of African Americans	1
Superheroes	1
Superman	1
Tintin	4
Toon Books	1
Travels of Thelonius	1
Trickster	1
Under the volcano	1
Unsinkable Walker Bean	1
The Wall: Growing up behind the Iron Curtain	1
Warriors	1
Yummy	1
Zero gravity	1
Zita the Spacegirl	2

Appendix E

Survey Schedule

School profile

- 1.) In which county is your school located?
- 2.) Is your school religious?

Selection

- 3.) Do you collect comic books or graphic novels in your school library?
- 4.) What motivates you to collect comic books or graphic novels in your school library? Check all that apply.
 - a. I like them.
 - b. I read them for pleasure.
 - c. The students request them.
 - d. I read the research that indicates that using graphic novels builds literacy.
 - e. The library literature has convinced me to do so.
 - f. Other librarians have recommended them.
 - g. I hope it will lead to more non-comic book reading.
 - h. Journal article.
 - i. Workshop or conference presentation.
 - j. Other.
- 5.) Is there a certain type of comic book or graphic novel you don't collect?
- 6.) Which type don't you select?
- 7.) Why don't you collect that type of graphic novel or comic book?
- 8.) Name up to five comic book or graphic novel titles you would recommend that elementary and /or middle school libraries should have.
- 9.) Why do you recommend those five titles?
- 10.) Which type of comic book or graphic novels do you collect?
 - a. Superheroes such as Batman or Ironman
 - b. Comic strip collections such as Peanuts or Garfield
 - c. Manga such as Yotsuba!
 - d. Wordless comic books or wordless graphic novels such as Owly
 - e. Movie or TV tie-ins, such as Indiana Jones or SpongeBob
 - f. Graphic novels of popular fiction books, such as Stormbreaker or Maximum Ride
 - g. Other fiction comic books or graphic novels
 - h. Graphic novel biographies

- i. Graphic novel religious or Bible stories
- j. Graphic novel mythology
- k. Graphic novel non-fiction about historical events
- l. Graphic novel non-fiction about science
- m. Other non-fiction graphic novel titles

11.) Which tools do you use to select comic books or graphic novels? Check all that apply.

- a. Book reviews
- b. Journal articles
- c. Published comic book evaluation criteria
- d. Student input
- e. List serves
- f. Conferences or other professional workshops
- g. Catalogs
- h. Other librarians' recommendations
- i. Webinars
- j. Amazon reviews
- k. Comic book stores
- l. Books with graphic novel recommended lists
- m. Online title selection with vendors such as Baker and Taylor or Follett
- n. Reading or perusing a copy of the comic book or graphic novel
- o. Other

12.) If you don't collect comic books or graphic novels, why? Check all that apply.

- a. They are too violent.
- b. They are too sexual.
- c. I don't know what to collect.
- d. I think the parents would not want them.
- e. I think the teachers would not want them.
- f. I think the administration would not want them.
- g. I don't like them.
- h. I don't like them.
- i. I think they're too easy to read.
- j. I've received complaints or challenges about them.
- k. I don't like the way women are depicted in them.
- l. Other

13.) How many comic books and graphic novels are there in your school's collection?

- a. 0

- b. 1–25
- c. 26–50
- d. 51–100
- e. 101–250
- f. 251–500
- g. 500+

14.) How many total titles are in your collection?

Personal attitudes about comic books and graphic novels

- 15.) Did you read comic books as a child or teen?
- 16.) List one or two of your favorite series as a child or teen.
- 17.) How do you feel about comic books or graphic novels?

More about you

- 18.) Do you have a Master's in Library Science (M.L.S., M.L.I.S., or M.I.L.S.) degree?
- 19.) Do you train the teachers about technology of curriculum, or give workshops for the teachers in technology or curriculum?
- 20.) Do you have a school library website?
- 21.) Check all the ways your school library website provides opportunities for students to contribute. Check all that apply.
 - a. Blogs
 - b. Book recommendations
 - c. Video sharing
 - d. Wikis
 - e. Photo sharing
 - f. Digital book trailers they make
 - g. Podcasts
 - h. They do not contribute to the school library website
 - i. Other
- 22.) Are the AASL 21st century standards for the 21st Century Learner incorporated into your library curriculum?
- 23.) Which best describes your relationship with technology? Check all that apply.
 - a. I don't really like it and I don't use it much.
 - b. I'm not very comfortable with it, but I want to learn more.
 - c. I mainly use Word and email.

- d. I like to learn new programs and websites and share them with others at my school.
- e. I can make websites.
- f. I've created or used a wiki.
- g. I am one of the technology leaders at my school.

24.) Which of the following do you read frequently? Check all that apply.

- a. Library-related journal such as School Library Journal
- b. Curriculum-related journal such as Educational Leadership
- c. Technology-related journal such as Internet@Schools
- d. Library-related blog
- e. Curriculum-related blog
- f. Technology-related blog
- g. Comic-related blog

25.) Any other comments

Appendix F

Deductive comic book and graphic novel checklist for elementary schools

Name of school: _____

Grade levels of school: _____

Religious? Y / N

County _____

Library has a web page? Y / N

Title	In collection? Yes / No	Notes
Archie		
Babymouse		
Babysitters' Club		
Batman		
Big adventures of Majoko		
*Bone		
Calvin and Hobbes		
Courageous princess		
Fashion Kitty		
Lions, tigers, and bears		
Magic Pickle		
Owly		
Peanuts		
Star Wars Clone Wars Advent.		
*Stinky		
Tintin		
*To Dance		
*Uncle Scrooge / Donald Duck		
Warriors manga		
*Yotsuba		

*Indicates award winner.

Notes: _____

Appendix G

Deductive comic book and graphic novel checklist for middle schools

Name of school: _____

Grade levels of school: _____

Religious? Y / N

County _____

Library has a web page? Y / N

Title	In collection? Y / N	Notes
*American Born Chinese		
Amulet		
*Bone		
Castle Waiting		
Garfield		
*Herobear		
Indiana Jones		
*Laika		
Maximum Ride		
Messiah		
Mouse Guard		
Queen Bee		
Satchel Paige		
*Smile		
Spider-Man		
Star Wars Clone Wars		
Tintin		
*To Dance		
*Usagi Yojimbo		
X-Men		

*Indicates award winner.

Notes: _____
